

SHUTTING
THE DOOR
ON THE
CATHOLIC CLOSET

PAGE 7

IN THESE TIMES

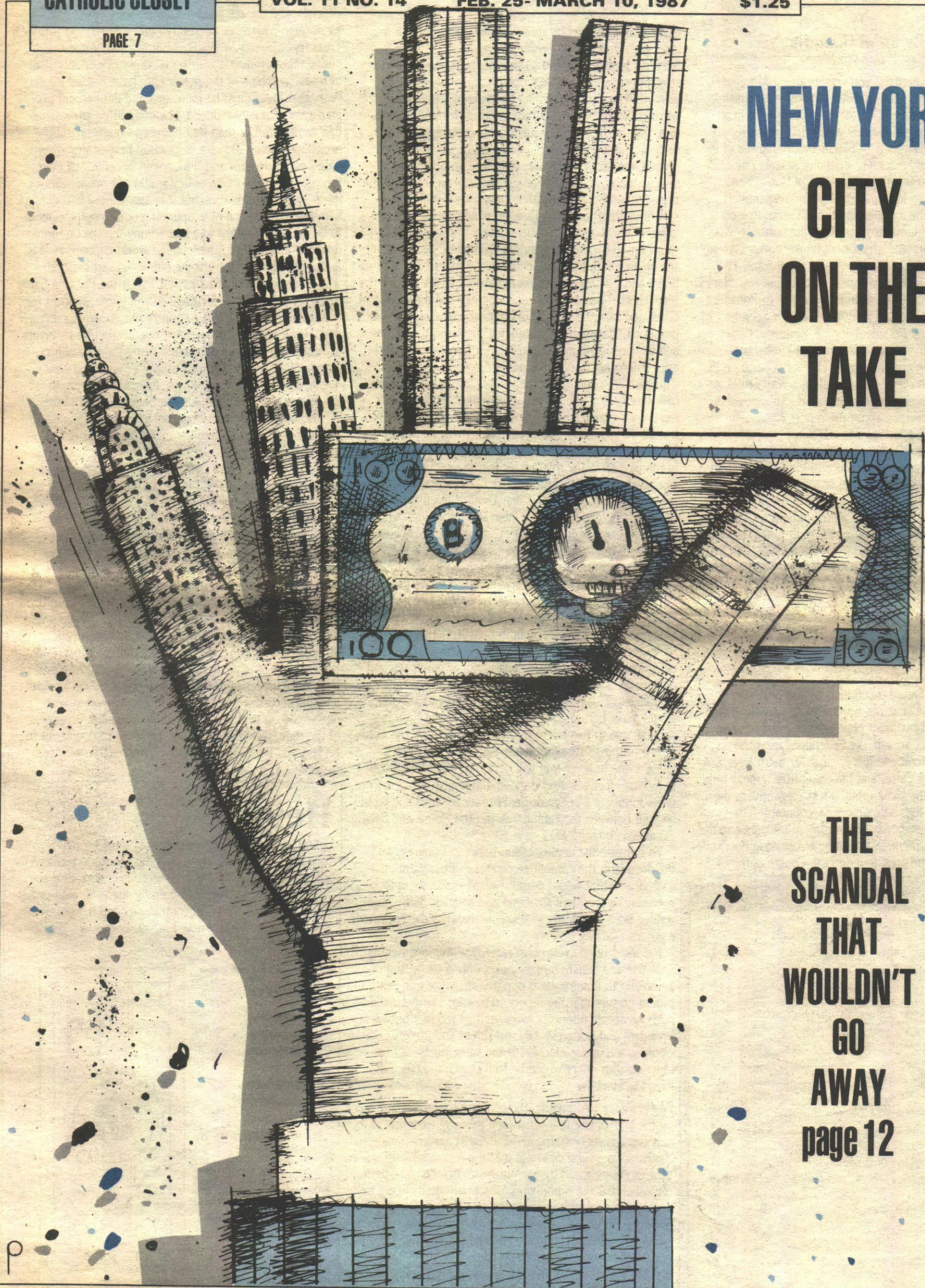
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NEW YORK: CITY ON THE TAKE

THE
SCANDAL
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The Constitution: some things are just better off left alone

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

During this bicentennial anniversary of the U.S. Constitution, one can expect renewed debate on the usefulness of its provisions and on the desirability of a new constitutional convention. This year's first major report on the document, entitled "A Bicentennial Analysis of the American Political Structure," contains at least one startling proposal—to lengthen the terms of House and Senate members to four and eight years, respectively.

The report of the foundation funded Committee on the Constitutional System illustrates how the nation's "wise men"—the lawyers and investment bankers who provide counsel to high officials—view American politics. The committee was chaired by Kansas Republican Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, Lloyd Cutler, former counselor to President Jimmy Carter, and C. Douglas Dillon, former Secretary of the Treasury under President John F. Kennedy. Cutler, who appears to have been the principal intellectual force behind the report, epitomizes the current generation of Washington "wise men," just as Dillon, a Wall Street Republican who served under a Democrat, epitomized the previous. (In interviews about the report, Kassebaum constantly deferred to Cutler and Dillon.)

The report reveals a remarkable continuity between the Founding Fathers and the current elite. James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and other leading members of the Constitutional Convention wanted to use the new Constitution of 1787 to create a government substantially insulated from the "passions" of the multitude. The Sen-

to make both bodies far more powerful and politically independent than they presently are.

Strains in the system: The report appears to be straightforward, describing a political malady and then prescribing a cure. According to the committee, there are two significant "signs of strain in our governing process": first, "the outsized and unsustainable deficits that defy the good intentions of legislators and Presidents"; and second, the lack of consistency in foreign policy—evidenced both in Congress' failure to ratify treaties and the president's "frustration with congressional-imposed restrictions [that] have led Presidents and their staffs to launch important diplomatic, military and covert activities in secret and without consulting Congress." The committee blames both on weaknesses in the American constitutional and political structure. According to the report, the separation of powers between Congress and the president, combined with the decline of political party loyalty, has produced "stalemate and deadlock" between the Congress and the president and "inconsistency, incoherence and even stagnation in national policy."

In the 19th century, the report suggests, the diffusion of authority created by the separation of powers was offset by a strong party system. The same party that controlled the presidency controlled Congress, and party members shared a common philosophy and program. But in the past 80 years voters have lost their loyalty to particular parties, creating the specter of Democratic Congresses and Republican presidents, and legislators have become beholden to "special interests" rather than to the parties for campaign financing, creating a lack of accountability to one's fellow legislators as well as to the party leader. Thus, even when the same party controls the White House and Congress—as occurred, for instance, during Carter's years—the president may be unable to get his economic program through and his treaties ratified.

The committee proposes both constitutional and legislative remedies. To strengthen the political parties, it calls for each party to give congressional nominees and officeholders a "significant voice" in selecting presidential candidates. This proposal, the report dares to suggest, would make both the president and Congress "jointly accountable to the voters in the next election." The committee proposes that Congress require all states to include a line or lever that will permit straight-ticket voting in federal elections. And the committee also calls on Congress to create a congressional broadcast fund that would be split between the candidates and the House and Senate campaign committees.

To mitigate the confrontation between Congress and the president, the committee proposes a constitutional amendment that would permit Congress members to serve in the president's cabinet and another that would reduce from two-thirds to a simple majority the requirement for ratifying treaties.

But the most far-reaching "remedy"—the lengthening of House and Senate terms—bears only a tangential relationship to the problems of party structure and separation of powers that the report addresses. The ostensible purpose of this reform is to strengthen the link between president and Congress—the president and Congress would come up for election at the same time—but its most obvious effect would be to distance the elected from the electors.

Federalists revisited: The committee's report founders on the lack of resolution between the explicit terms of its analysis and its unstated neo-Federalist assumptions. Neither of the signs of strain that the report laments appear directly caused by constitutional defects, and the remedies that the report proposes would be as likely to aggravate as to remove these strains. Neither the majority in Congress nor the president has been willing to propose budgetary measures that would substantially reduce deficits. Both the White House and the congressional majority are committed to enormous military expenditures; neither

is willing to champion tax increases or substantial reductions in entitlements. The deficit also has little to do with party discipline and split-ticket voting. Indeed, if a Republican-dominated Congress had hewed more closely to the Republican president's program the deficits would be substantially larger.

If there is a conflict that must be resolved, it is between popular opinions about the budget, reflected in elected officials, and the opinions of elite policy-makers like Cutler, former Commerce Secretary Peter Peterson or former Treasury Secretary W. Michael Blumenthal. While the public resists reductions in social programs or increases in taxes, members of the policy elite have argued for six years that taxes must be increased and entitlement programs substantially reduced. The committee addressing this conflict rather than that between Congress and the president when it draws a distinction between programs based on short-term and "longer-run benefits." Of course, the conflict over foreign policy would not occur without the separation of powers, but it is also rooted in a conflict between popular and elite opinion. Popular opinion tends to be more isolationist and less willing to take up money or arms on behalf of American-led world capitalism. It is as easy for lobbies to turn the public against treaties with foreign powers, whether SALT II or the Panama Canal treaty, as it is difficult for them to win public support for long-term intervention in a country like Nicaragua. Presidents have attempted to resolve this conflict by resorting to subterfuge, the latest example being the Iran-contra scandal. But the committee's proposals would at best displace the locus of subterfuge. Instead of having to fool the Senate, the president, now in better control of the Senate, would merely have to fool the electorate.

Cutler and other committee members certainly had no intention of making it easier for the Nixon or Reagan administrations to have defied public and congressional opinion in foreign policy. Cutler cut his own political teeth on the failure of the Senate to ratify the Carter administration's SALT II treaty. But in offering a proposal that would remove foreign policy-making even further from public pressure, the committee is suggesting precisely that. For this reason alone, the committee's report is particularly unwelcome at this time.

The U.S. Constitution is by no means a perfect document. The division of powers itself—conceived as a wedge against democracy, yet significantly modified by democratic reform—encourages a needless duplication of effort. And certain aspects of party decline—in particular, the preponderant influence of corporate political action committees—deserves scrutiny. But in this bicentennial year, one would do well to resist both neo-populist proposals of the right, which would subject the entire document to review, and the elitist end runs of Washington's "wise men."

INSIDE STORY

ate, they hoped, would function as a kind of House of Lords. (Until 1913 senators were elected by state legislatures rather than by direct popular vote.) As historian Gordon Wood has argued, the Federalists used the rhetoric of democracy to justify what for them were aristocratic ends. Yet Cutler and his committee appear to be doing precisely the same thing, if less elegantly: in the name of making legislators more "accountable," they want to create distance between elected officials and the voters who elect them. In the name of breaking the "stalemate" between the president and the Congress, they want

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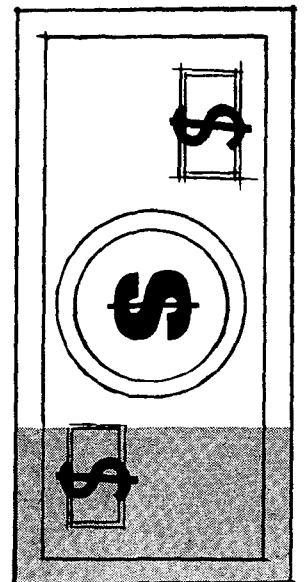
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Help!!!

Last week we announced a limping start for our \$125,000 fund drive. This week we're crawling. Our total received for the week was only \$2,782 from 68 contributors, plus six new sustainers who pledged \$560 for the year. That brings us up to \$28,461 from 746 contributors and it gives us 29 new sustainers. We are now \$96,539 short of our goal.

Goal \$125,000

Current total: \$28,461



By Ellen Cantarow

U.S. military attacks environment

THE UPPER CAPE, WHICH DIPS INTO THE ATLANTIC south of Boston, is full of reeds, rushes and willow trees, scrubby pines thrusting out of sand and little white colonial houses. It is an idyllic retreat where, in the words of one Upper Cape resident, "every time you turn around you bump into a Quaker."

Across 26,000 acres of this tranquility sprawls the Massachusetts Military Reservation, composed of Otis Air National Guard base and Camp Edwards, which serves the Army's National Guard and reservists. Touching five neighboring towns, the Reservation has the only artillery firing range east of Fort Drum, N.Y., 15 hours to the west. Military from all over New England, as well as from Pennsylvania and Alabama, come here to practice on a "terrain uniquely compatible with wartime and combat situations," in the words of Lt. Colleen Halloran, public affairs officer for Camp Edwards.

The war games through which the jet fighters, 81 mm mortars and big guns like 105 mm and 155 mm Howitzers frolic in this sometime paradise may be merely simulated. But not the dirt they—or rather the petroleum products and explosives used to make them run—deal. Pollution from the Reservation has created what one specialist in toxic waste, Dr. David Ozonoff, professor of epidemiology at the Boston University School of Public Health, has called "a nightmare case, one of the worst in the state."

A three-volume report by the E.C. Jordan Company, commissioned by the federal National Guard (federal law makes such evaluation mandatory) made public this past December that the handling of toxic waste at the Reservation has caused extensive contamination of the underlying water table.

Because of the region's geology—the Cape is an arm of sorts, with the shoulder at the Upper Cape, the fingers down south in Provincetown—all Cape water, with whatever it contains, flows down from the base, the highest point in the underground system, to every other point in the region. What makes this particularly alarming is that the water table under the base is what geologists call a "sole source aquifer"—it constitutes the only source of drinking water for the entire Cape.

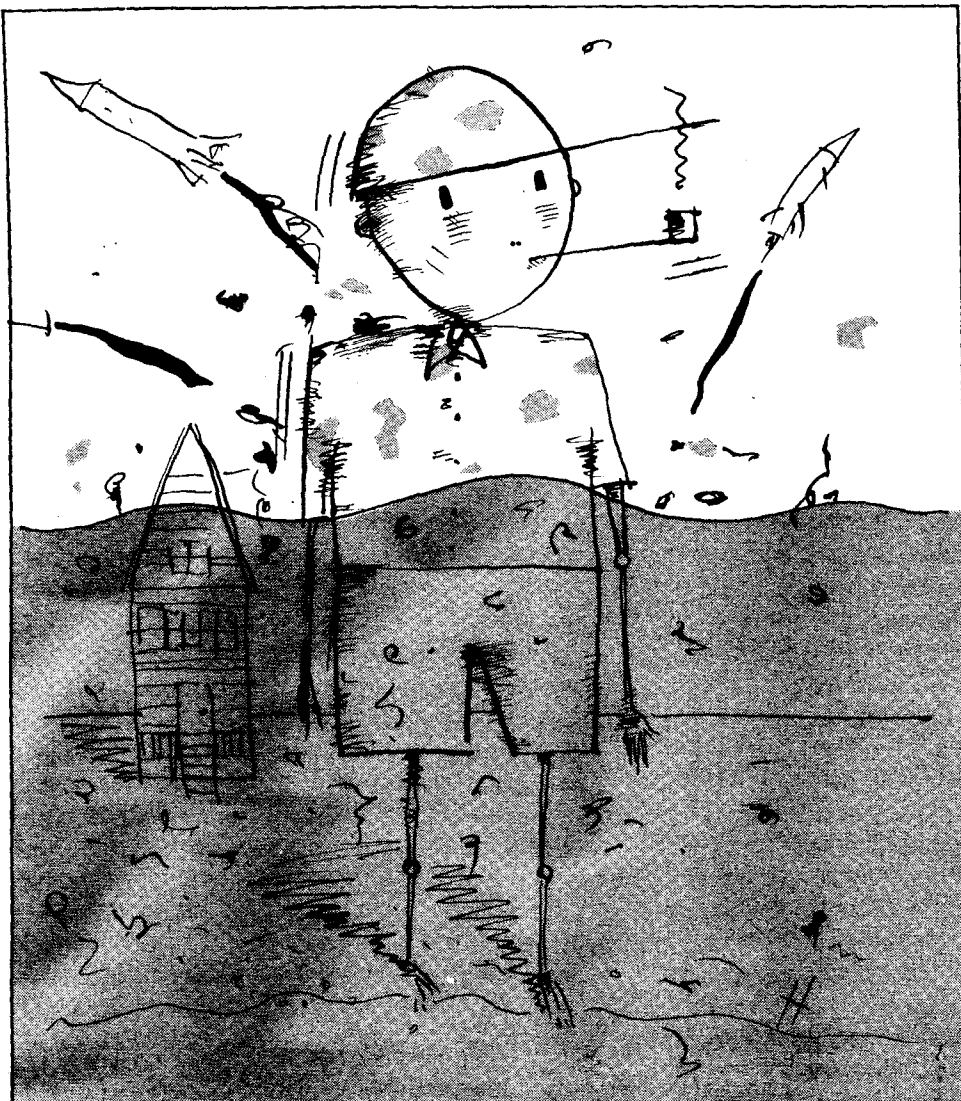
Don't drink the water: According to the Jordan report, what has gotten into the drinking water over the course of some 40 years of dumping and spilling is:

- Close to 7 million gallons of aviation fuel, which contains benzene, a potent leukemia-linked substance.

- Trichlorethylene, more popularly known as TCE, the chemical that put Woburn, Mass., in news headlines when that town's childhood leukemia levels shot up in the late '70s. TCEs at Otis, used in engine-cleaning and other solvents, have been dumped into storm drains at the base.

- Rocket fuel, containing dimethylhydrazene, which, in one of its forms, is a potent cause of colon cancer in animals.

The Jordan report also estimates that more than 50,000 gallons of aviation fuel, waste oils, solvents, paint thinners, spent hydraulic fluids and transformer oils have been set on fire at the base in "fire training" exercises (training in fire extinction). The burned products seep into the earth as well as evaporating into the air. Transformer oils



TOXIC

This is the third installment in a series on toxic waste issues.

contain PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), which, when burned, produce dioxin (the contaminant in Agent Orange) and dibenzofurans, also highly toxic.

"Artillery propellant" bags are also routinely burned at the base. These small burlap sacks, each containing around four pounds of highly explosive propellant, come in strings of seven. The number of bags used determines how far a shell travels. Using all seven bags for any shot might cause a 42-pound shell potentially to fall in the middle of a residential area, so three bags are always snipped off and then burned. Because nitrocellulose, a propellant ingredient, is on the EPA's hazardous substance list, the base has now been cited for noncompliance with federal law in its continued burning of the bags.

After heavy pressure and public outcry by a group of Upper Cape activists who were spurred by the Jordan report, another earlier report and problems of Reservation origin (a large forest fire set off in 1982 by an artillery shell, the discovery that the area's children were playing with grenades they found at the edges of the base, noise pollution from the big jets), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health in December 1985 released data disclosing that residents of certain

towns near the base had been contracting leukemia, breast, lung, colon and rectal cancer at rates from 36 percent to 79 percent above the state averages for those diseases. These figures make the Upper Cape the state's leader in cancer rates.

In a recent trial of Upper Cape activists charged with disorderly conduct when they blocked one of the entrances to the base to protest the pollution as well as the training of Green Berets at the base, State Cancer Registry Director Richard Clapp stated that chemicals spilled, dumped and burned at the base could have contributed to the elevated cancer rates in the area.

Toxic pollution from a U.S. military base on the Upper Cape, south of Boston, has created what one specialist calls "a nightmare case, one of the worst in the state."

Until recently, requests directed at the state to investigate the situation met with silence or dismissal. Only after the activists had conversations with Clapp did the Registry make the cancer data publicly available. Yet the department as a whole failed to initiate studies that might prove a link between the cancers the data described and the pollution there.

On the contrary, in September 1985 the department's Deputy Commissioner Steven Havis said that the Upper Cape's elevated

cancer rates owed to "lifestyle factors" like smoking. The health department also suggested that the lung cancers might be caused by pollution from an electric plant in another neighboring town, Sandwich, even though data for Sandwich show no elevated lung cancer rates there, and the Cape activists observed that the prevailing winds wouldn't cause effluent from the power plant to go to Falmouth, the town with the highest lung cancer rate.

A cover-up? The activists charged cover-up. So did Joel Swartz, a health department scientist who, in debunking Havis' "lifestyle" charge, said, "There wasn't the slightest evidence that women on the Upper Cape smoked any more than women elsewhere. But exposure to hydrocarbons produced when fossil fuels and propellant are burned does cause lung cancer." Swartz was hired in 1984 as the department's Director of Risk Assessment at its Center for Environmental Disease and Disease Prevention.

Among possible investigatory techniques Swartz suggested to the Department for the Upper Cape situation was blood testing in the five-town area where the cancer figures were the most glaring. But the blood study was rejected by all of Swartz's superiors.

"I became convinced," he said, "that especially regarding the type of cancer clusters that appeared on the Upper Cape, not only was the Department not pursuing these issues, they were foot-dragging. I think the powers that be in the department didn't want to find out what was going on."

And so Swartz quit in 1986.

The state health department denies there was any cover-up. "We have been very hesitant to jump to conclusions," says John Stobierski, director of the department's Office of Public Information and Health Education. "When all's said and done we will be seen to have handled this very responsibly." For support, Stobierski points to a three-phase Upper Cape study now being prepared by the department.

But the Upper Cape activists are still unhappy. They say the first phase of the study is based on death statistics, data too old to be currently useful. The third phase is simply to be a determination whether studying environmental pollution links with the area's cancers is feasible. Only the second phase—an investigation, by an agency independent of the state of the histories of people currently ill with cancer—meets the activists' demands. For four years they have pressed for such an independent study. But so far this protocol hasn't gone out for bidding. "We'll believe it when we see it," says Joel Feigenbaum, a spokesperson for Upper Cape Concerned Citizens, the group devoted to the pollution and cancer problems.

The activists and their supporters believe that military money is at the heart of the issue. "This state ranks number two in the country for military spending," says Feigenbaum, "and Gov. Dukakis doesn't want to run afoul of the Pentagon, which decides where military contracts are awarded and how much money goes to given installations."

Ellen Cantarow is a Cambridge-based journalist.

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By Joel Bleifuss

Is this the other rationale for Star Wars?

According to the *Washington Post*, last week Mikhail S. Gorbachov told an audience of 850 visiting Americans, other foreigners and Soviets that President Reagan, at their 1985 meeting in Geneva, promised to join forces with the Soviet Union in case the world was invaded by aliens from outer space. "At our meeting in Geneva," Gorbachov said, "the U.S. president said that if the earth faced an invasion by extraterrestrials the United States and the Soviet Union should join forces to repel such an invasion. I shall not dispute the hypothesis, although I think it is too early to worry about such an intrusion."

True then, true today

Gen. David M. Sharp, commandant, U.S. Marine Corps (1960-63), said in 1966: "I believe that I would keep our dirty, bloody, dollar-soaked fingers out of the business of these nations so full of depressed, exploited people, they will arrive at a solution of their own. And if unfortunately their revolution must be of the violent type because the 'haves' refuse to share with the 'have-nots' by any peaceful means, at least what they get will be their own, and not the American style, which they don't want and above all don't want crammed down their throats by Americans."

Hungarian Communists cut from ballot

The 30th anniversary of the October 1956 Soviet occupation of Hungary has come and passed. Last November the 600-member Hungarian Writers Union marked the occasion at least metaphorically by voting to remove 27 Communist Party-sponsored candidates from the list of writers to be considered in the union's election for their board of directors. Those 27 writers and editors then resigned. Subsequently, the government disbanded the Writers Union. According to a *New York Times* report, Culture Minister Bela Kopecki said this was done because "the union debates for some time have not been solely related to literature." The issues raised remain unresolved, however, negotiations for a settlement continue and there has been no sweep of arrests.

Their crime: protesting moral evil

The FBI has admitted to spying on two prominent Catholic bishops, according to the *National Catholic Reporter* (famously known as *NCR*). The bishops, Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit and Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle (see *In These Times* Nov. 5, 1986)—both leading Catholic critics of U.S. nuclear arms policy—cooperated with *NCR* in filing Freedom of Information Act (FOI) requests with the FBI. Although it is now known that the FBI has secretly compiled dossiers on the men, the agency will not release the contents until it has decided whether or not the files should be "classified" and consequently non-releasable. Reactions to these revelations have been diverse. Chicago's Cardinal Joseph Bernardin called the spying "very frightening." Rep. Don Edwards (D-CA), whose House subcommittee held hearings last week on domestic surveillance, said he was "really shocked" and his committee "is not going to stand for it." Jesuit Priest Robert Drinan, the former Massachusetts Congressman who helped draft an agreement with the FBI that was supposed to end domestic spying in the '70s, said, "This doesn't surprise me." Gumbleton, who had been an anti-war activist in the '60s, was not surprised either. He had requested and seen his file years ago, but never publicly mentioned it. More surprised, however, was Bishop Hunthausen, who only came to prominence in 1982 when he publicly said he would not pay half his income tax to protest the "moral evil of U.S. nuclear weapons buildup."

Will the real profiteers please stand up

More and more TV stations—though no networks—have decided to air condom advertisements in response to the AIDS crisis. But ABC affiliate WCBV-TV of Boston is not one of them. Recently on ABC's *Nightline* James Coppersmith, WCBV general manager, explained his decision not to run rubber ads. "We are not for rent," declared Coppersmith. "These condom manufacturers are just out to make profits." His statement was immediately followed by an ABC network commercial for Dow Chemical.



The New York Union of the Homeless hosted a rally in front of the United Nations on February 14 to protest U.S. government censorship. The U.N. has designated 1987 as "Year of Shelter for the Homeless," and to that end the U.N. produced a film to document the plight of those without homes. Included in the original footage were scenes of homeless people in America. Well, the U.S. mission to the U.N. would have none of that and pressured the U.N.'s Public Information Office to cut those scenes portraying America's homeless.

Growing older and poorer in the U.S.

"The sad truth is that the sickest and most fragile of our country live out their last days in economic fear," says Rep. Claude Pepper (D-FL). That sad truth is fleshed out in *On the Other Side of Easy Street: Myths and Facts about the Economics of Old Age*, a study recently released by the Villers Foundation.

According to the report, 11.5 million (42 percent) of the nation's old people live either below the poverty line or in the "economic vulnerability" zone—a term the study used for somebody living on less than twice the individual poverty rate of \$5,156 a year (1985 figure). Three and a half million (12.6 percent) of the elderly are living below the poverty line, and another eight million live in the "economic vulnerability" zone.

Poverty is especially widespread among certain subgroups: old women (who make up three-fourths of the elderly poor) and old blacks (who have almost three times the poverty rate of old whites). Currently Social Security benefits keep 9.4 million people above the poverty level. Without Social Security the number of elderly living in poverty would quadruple, from 12.6 to 48 percent, according to the Census Bureau.

There was a slight decline in elderly poverty from 1980 to 1985, from 15.7 percent to 12.6 percent, but this drop is deceiving. The study notes that the official method for determining poverty considers only the amount of income available for daily living costs, and not

major expenditures like health care. Old people spend three times more of their disposable income on out-of-pocket health care costs than the average person. This amounts to 15 percent of the elderly's disposable income, the same proportion they were spending before Medicare and Medicaid were established in 1965. And this shows that those benefits have not kept up with skyrocketing health-care costs.

Even so, President Reagan plans to cut \$8 billion out of the Medicare and Medicaid programs in the first year of his new budget. Medicare, the national health insurance plan for the elderly, is slated for premium hikes. Medicaid, the low-income health-care benefit program, would suffer "ham-handed cuts" in services, according to Ed Howard, Villers Foundation policy coordinator.

And as the budget deficit grows, other fiscal malcontents are finding Social Security an easy target for cuts. Among them is Paul Hewitt, director of Americans for Generational Equity (AGE) in Washington. Hewitt sees no urgency in the situation of today's retirees, who he says are generally well off. Instead, he believes government policy should concentrate on insuring the well-being of the baby-boom generation when they retire. The elderly population will have doubled by that time, says Hewitt, and supporting them all through Social Security will create a terrific stress on the work force of that time. For that reason, AGE promotes a "generational equity program" to create upward mobility and independent wealth for the baby boom genera-

tion and its children. "We must make baby boomers so much more wealthy than we are that they can support themselves entirely when they retire," Hewitt says. "As it is now, the work force in the year 2025 may pay as much as 25 to 40 percent of their paychecks to Social Security."

But Ed Howard of the Villers Foundation says groups such as AGE are exploiting natural differences between the old and the working young in order to promote their agenda of dismantling federal aid programs. "There are some who are making a living out of weakening support for Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid among the young," he says. "They're really just trying to use the 'generational equity' debate as a way of doing in federal programs."

According to Maggie Kuhn, 81, leader of the Gray Panthers, groups such as AGE make a mistake in assuming that the oldest and youngest generations have different interests and priorities. "There has been a very nasty antisocial trend lately, fostered by groups such as AGE, separating the old from the young," Kuhn told *In These Times*.

In her work with the Gray Panthers, a coalition that works on issues affecting both the old and young, she has observed many similarities in the ways society regards the two groups. "Ours is a capitalistic, competitive society that worships the bottom line. In that context, people who are old or young are marginalized. The old are pushed out."

—Maris Strautmanis

UAW and AFSCME to fight it out at Harvard

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and the United Auto Workers (UAW) are each trying to win the hearts and membership of Harvard University's 4,000 clerical and technical workers. On January 29 AFSCME accepted the affiliation of the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers (HUCTW), an in-house union originally affiliated with the UAW, which has been trying to organize Harvard for more than a decade.

HUCTW leaders broke with the UAW in September 1985 and formed an independent union that continued to grow despite limited financial resources. Their agreement with AFSCME comes at a time when HUCTW and its 400 employee-organizers have exhausted their budget trying to compete with the UAW. "AFSCME saved our lives," HUCTW Organizing Director Kristine Rondeau told *In These Times*. "We would have had to close our doors without them."

HUCTW split with the UAW over organizing strategy. "We wanted the local organizers to go to Detroit

to work on our clerical drive there," said UAW Staff Representative Robert Monahan. "One objected and refused to go. Another went for a short time, then returned. And they objected when we brought in staff organizers from outside Harvard." In September 1985 the UAW fired the Harvard organizers, including Rondeau. "There's got to be some accountability to the national," said Monahan. "They objected to that."

HUCTW supporters counter with charges that the UAW, as a predominantly male, blue-collar union, was unresponsive to the needs of Harvard's female, white-collar workers. According to the *Harvard Law Review*, the UAW organizing effort consisted of heavy literature distribution, whereas the HUCTW focused on personal contact through small groups and one-on-one discussion. One source familiar with the situation said, "The UAW never really made an effort here. They just don't have much expertise with women workers." The issues involved in the drive include low pay (average \$14,000 a year), lack of advancement opportunities and pension coverage for older workers.

AFSCME's entry into the fray may change Harvard's response, which has until now been low-key. Despite the presence of five unions

representing police, maintenance, food service and graphics personnel on campus, and despite President Derek Bok's background in labor relations, Harvard opposes organization of its clerical workforce. "Those unions were organized in the '30s," employee relations spokesman Brian Sinclair said. "We believe it would be detrimental to our clerical workers to unionize."

Harvard's response has been to increase some salary grades and benefits in an attempt to regain worker confidence and reduce the 40 percent turnover rate. The university has also gone to court to have the bargaining unit enlarged, to make organizing more difficult. "Clerical workers are different than our other workers," said Sinclair. "They don't need a union."

Despite AFSCME's designation of Harvard as its key organizing objective in 1987 and the union's pledge to spend \$500,000 in this year alone to unionize the university, the UAW shows no signs of pulling out. "We intend to hire more organizers," said the UAW's Monahan. "I think there'll be a good push for an election." While AFSCME President Gerald McEntee vows to fight clean, he said, "We'll do whatever it takes to win.... We're going to go all out."

—Darcy DeMarco

Another scandal rocks Ottawa

Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and his oxymoronic Progressive Conservative Party are in trouble again.

In power for two and a half years, after 16 years in the opposition (interrupted only by the nine-month Joe Clark interregnum in 1980), the Mulroney government has experienced both major and minor scandals. Numerous cabinet ministers have had to resign or were indicted for conflicts of interest, financial improprieties, favoritism, negligence and even socializing with prostitutes. Not a pretty picture for a party that started out in 1984 on a highly moralistic and self-righteous tone.

Now another scandal has erupted in Ottawa, a scandal that tops all previous improprieties. It started in June 1986 when the Swiss arms firm Buehrle Oerlikon was awarded a government contract—worth between \$500 million and \$1 billion (Canadian)—to build a complete air defense system for the Canadian armed forces stationed in West Germany. Buehrle Oerlikon paid nearly \$3 million (Canadian) for land in St. Jean, Quebec, on which it intended to build a plant for manufacturing a major part of the air defense system. But the *Montreal Gazette* reported on January 17 that this same piece of land had been sold 11 days before Oerlikon acquired it, for \$800,000 (Canadian) and had changed hands two or three times more before it became the Swiss firm's possession. Obviously, somebody had known

about Oerlikon's intention and had benefitted by a quick and hefty land speculation. But how did they know about Oerlikon's plans? Presumably by a leak from a government source. But who? It turned out that the real estate was situated in the election district (or riding, as Canadians call it) of André Bissonet, a junior minister in the Ministry of Transportation who happened to be in charge of helping Oerlikon with its land acquisition.

Although no wrongdoing on Bissonet's part had been proven when the *Montreal Gazette* story broke, the next day Prime Minister Mulroney fired the junior minister. That was an unusual step for Mulroney, who in previous scandals had always hesitated to remove anyone. A day later, Doug Frith, the chairman of the Liberal caucus, charged that about one-third of the \$3 million Oerlikon had paid for the land had ended up in the pocket of Normand Ouellette, the president of the riding's Conservative Party and a friend and associate of Bissonet.

Frith said his information was based on a letter that Oerlikon's Canadian lawyers had sent to Ouellette, claiming the Swiss firm had known nothing about the money diverted to the Conservative Party leader. In the letter, Oerlikon demanded a return of the ill-gotten sum. The company had assumed, its lawyers said, that the price paid for the land was fair. Indeed, the Swiss firm said it had consulted Bissonet about the price and was told by him it was very reasonable.

After Frith's disclosures, and the resulting uproar in parliament, the

prime minister did not specifically deny the scenario spelled out by the Liberal Party, he merely ordered the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to conduct a thorough investigation. The opposition parties, however, have demanded a public parliamentary inquiry, deeming the police investigation to be too narrowly focused and under wraps.

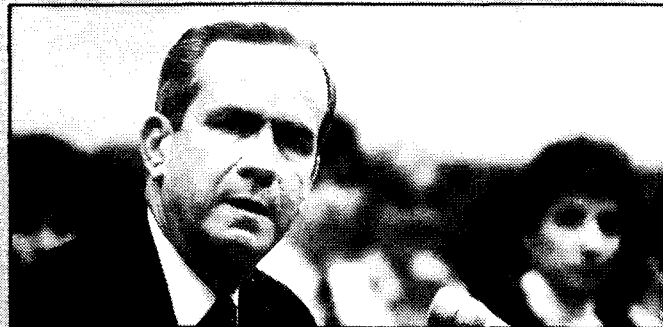
Questions about the "Oerlikon affair" abound. Oerlikon had won the government defense contract against stiff competition, even though its system had not yet been tried. Why did it get the contract? Because its air defense system was really superior or because it promised someone in the Canadian government or the Conservative Party to pay a kickback of \$1 million. What was Bissonet's role? Was he directly involved? Did he know of or promote the speculative land deal? What about other members of the Mulroney government? And was Oerlikon merely the innocent victim of some clever Canadian pols duping it into paying an inflated land price and then pocketing the difference? Or did it knowingly pay too much as a kickback?

The Oerlikon affair has further weakened the public's already diminished confidence in the Mulroney government. Recent opinion polls show a record low 23 percent of Canadians support the Progressive Conservatives, as opposed to 33 percent who support the New Democratic Party and 42 percent the Liberals. With more revelations likely, this scandal could prove the undoing of the Mulroney government.

—Reto Pieth

Two bullets bring down Pete Hamill

Former *Village Voice* columnist Pete Hamill, former *In These Times* "In Short" editor Rachel Sternberg and 12 other reporters resigned three weeks ago from the English-language daily the *Mexico City News* because that paper's publisher, Romulo O'Farrill, insisted they stop printing the opinions of students on strike at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (see story page 10). Hamill left the *Village Voice* to begin work as editor of the *Mexico City News* last November. According to one of the departing reporters, the final confrontation between Hamill and O'Farrill arose over a front-page story reporting that a bus carrying striking students was hit by two bullets. O'Farrill had previously told Hamill that he supported the university administration's position and ordered him to reduce strike coverage to "less than a little."



McFarlane's pathos

On February 9 former National Security Adviser Robert C. McFarlane tried to end his life. That morning he had been scheduled to appear before the Tower Commission investigating the Iran-contra arms scandal. According to the *Washington Post*, commission members former Sen. John Tower and Adm. Brent Scowcroft had both been McFarlane's mentors. Apparently the realization that he would have to appear before them, head bowed, was too much. A professional Irangate watcher, relating the above story, commented that he felt really sorry for the guy. McFarlane, he explained, at least tried to tell the truth some of the time during his testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee, while others like Donald Regan and Edwin Meese both appeared to be lying after every breath they took.

The company we keep

Last week the U.S. joined China, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, South Africa and the Soviet Union on the list of countries Amnesty International is targeting worldwide in its work against the death penalty. To mark the occasion Amnesty has published a stomach-wrenching, illustrated report, *USA—The Death Penalty*. The London-based human rights organization describes capital punishment in the U.S. as "a horrifying lottery in which politics, money, race and what state a crime was committed in could play a more decisive part in sending a defendant to the death chamber than the circumstances of the crime itself." And, says Amnesty, U.S. executions have at times violated 1984 U.N. guidelines against member nations by putting to death the mentally ill. One such case involved the 1985 electric-chair execution of a black farm worker in Virginia who had been diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic with a mental age of eight. Amnesty also charges that the use of the death penalty is cruel, and to illustrate this point highlights these cases among others: • It took 14 minutes to execute John Louis Evans in the electric chair in Alabama in 1983. During the first charge of electricity the electrode on his leg burned through and fell off. During the second charge smoke and flame erupted from his left temple and his leg. A third charge was administered after a stethoscope examination indicated Evans might not be dead. (An official on Virginia's death row explained that during executions he plugs up his nostrils with Vaseline to keep out the smell of burning flesh.) • In Mississippi, Jimmy Lee Gray was executed in 1983 by lethal gas that induced eight minutes of violent convulsions, during which Gray gasped for air at least 11 times as he repeatedly struck his head against a pole behind him. • In Texas, James Autry's execution by lethal injection in 1984 took at least 10 minutes and throughout much of that time he was conscious, writhing and complaining of pain.

We encourage readers to send news clips or story ideas to "In Short," *In These Times*, 1300 West Belmont Ave., Chicago, Illinois 60657. Please include your address and phone number.

By David Moberg

Greyhound: taking workers for a ride?

BUS DRIVERS FOR GREYHOUND ARE DISCOVERING once again what has been all too painful in recent years: the dog bites. After a rough strike in 1983, drivers were forced to give up 15 percent of their wages and benefits. Then the company continued to slash routes, claiming that many small-town destinations were unprofitable and that competition—especially from budget airlines—was cutting into its profits.

Drivers soon realized that increasingly Greyhound wasn't much interested in the bus business (one-fifth of corporate revenues), even though it has been profitable the past few years. Employment plummeted by nearly half to around 7,000.

Last December drivers rejected a demand for further concessions that had been narrowly approved by the union leadership. Then Greyhound promptly announced that

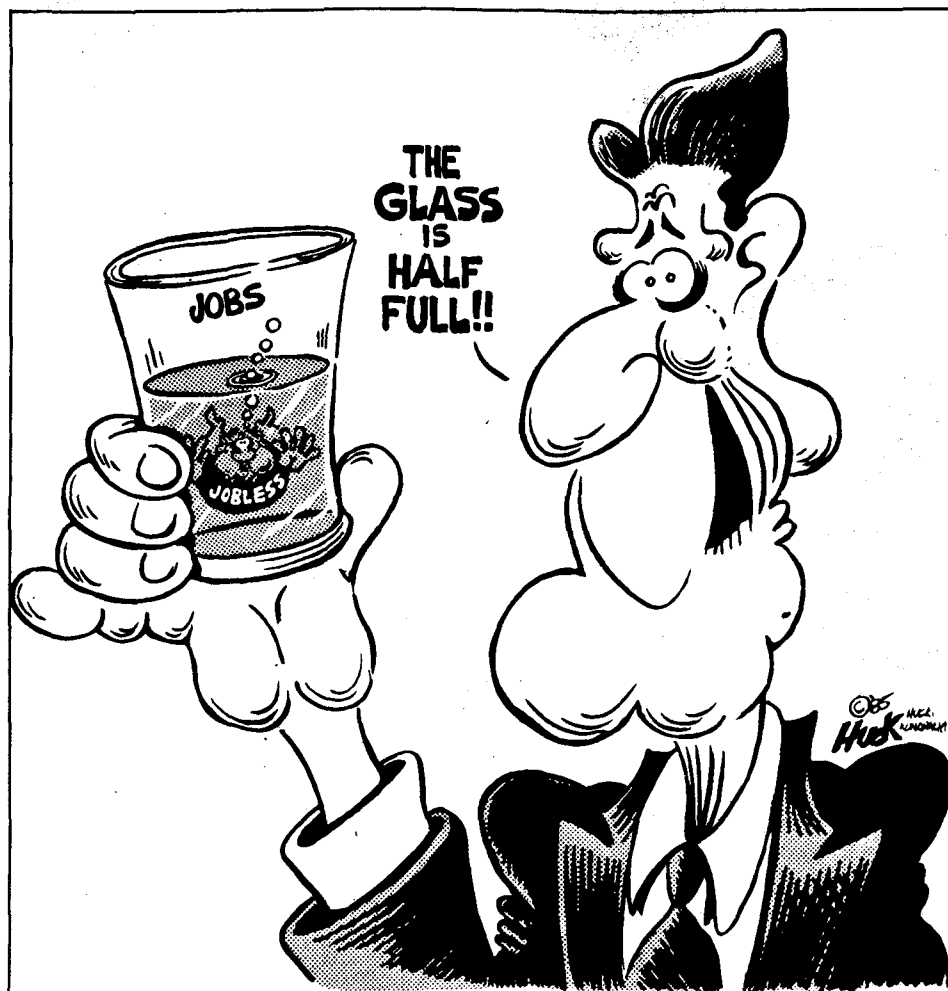
LABOR

it was selling the bus lines to a private holding company headed by Frederick W. Currey, a former president of competitor Trailways. Currey's BusLease Inc. has actually owned and leased to Greyhound much of the line's fleet in recent years. The buyers offered \$350-370 million for the bus line, the name and the famous dog logo. The deal is supposed to be consummated at midnight March 18, when the union's contract extension with Greyhound expires.

The whole transaction was curious. Rather than buy the company, Currey bought its assets. But neither party is revealing exactly what those assets are. And an undisclosed number of the 2,800 buses Greyhound operates are already leased and thus are not assets. Some dissident local union leaders argued that the price was too high, raising the specter that the renewed concessions Currey now demands are needed as much to finance the deal as to operate competitively. If Currey has problems raising the money, Greyhound Corp. could remain an owner of as much as one-fourth of the new company's stock.

Also, since it was an "asset buyout," Currey could claim he had no obligation to hire current Greyhound employees, to honor their contract or to recognize the union. If Currey had bought the company by purchasing its stock, the workers' contract and union representation would most likely have been legally better protected. Workers had some reason to worry: in 1983 Greyhound Corp. sold the assets of its Armour meatpacking division to ConAgra. The new owner opened the plants, hired all new workers and drastically slashed wages.

Currey came to the Amalgamated Transit Union representatives with a good-cop/bad-cop routine. On the one hand, he promised to revitalize the bus business, build employee *esprit de corps* and introduce new routes that would ultimately lead to more jobs. Many union representatives were impressed. Yet at the same time he made no promises about recognizing the union and demanded sharp reductions not only in drivers' mileage rates—while promising that



Labor cartoonists Gary Huck, now with the United Electrical Workers, and Mike Konopacki have won many union hearts (and quite a few chuckles) with their well-crafted, often witty and provocative drawings over the years. Now a collection has been put together by Charles H. Kerr Publishing (\$7.95 plus \$1 postage from 1740 West Greenleaf, Chicago, IL 60626) as *Bye! American* (from Huck's play on runaway industry and unions' gullible buy American campaigns). No pondering on subtleties required here; the archfiend (otherwise known as the boss) is clearly identified.

they could drive more miles—but also in various benefits.

Three presidents from big locals representing one-fourth of the drivers voted against Currey's proposal. "We might have accepted a reduction in the pay scale, but the complete destruction of wage rates and working conditions both was too much," said David Harrison, president of the Philadelphia local. "They were asking for the contractual right to have total say-so." The opposition is protesting the balloting, arguing they were not permitted to present their case to members.

Now it appears that Currey does not plan to play quite as rough as ConAgra did, in any case. Martin Burns, attorney for the ATU, said that Currey has said he will offer jobs to current Greyhound employees instead of hiring a new workforce even if the contract is rejected. But the new company would then probably lock out the former union workers and hire temporary replacements, Burns says. "This strategy is really not designed to get rid of the union, but to compel people to come to work on the terms [the company] has offered," Burns said. "They could have gone the other way, but I think they decided it would be difficult to replace the total workforce of experienced drivers."

Unions look to new strategies

In the face of new corporate assaults and a dwindling membership, organized labor has been trying to find new tactics. Last year the AFL-CIO and some affiliated unions launched a union credit card offering that

proved so popular that last week it announced another union benefit: a legal aid plan. Yet it's too early to judge whether such moves will help gain new members; the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported recently that union membership slipped further last year as a percentage of the workforce, now down from 18 percent to 17.5 percent.

Corporate or coordinated campaigns have been touted as one promising avenue to pressure employers either on their own or combined with strikes, in-plant disruptions (see below) or organizing drives. Basically, these involve hitting businesses at new points of vulnerability, such as environmental and safety regulations, public licensing, financial support from banks and other businesses or public image.

The record so far has been mixed. But the Buildings and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO recently won an important victory with a corporate campaign directed against Toyota and Ohbayashi Construction Corp., which was retained to build a new auto assembly plant in Georgetown, Ken. Ohbayashi planned to use non-union contractors.

The building trades' research raised serious questions about the incentive package offered by the state. It turned out to be more costly than first announced and lacking both guarantees on employment and adequate protections of the environment and public health. Demonstrations were staged in various cities around the country, and in Kentucky there was a steady barrage of criticism.

Late last year Ohbayashi signed an agreement to hire future workers from union hiring halls. Several years ago construction unions had lost out when Nissan built its

assembly plant in Smyrna, Tenn., and building trades feared that the new influx of Japanese investment and Japanese construction firms could undercut one of the remaining bastions of unionized construction work.

The victory raises a troubling question: if the building trades had been included as part of the deal from the beginning, would they have raised their valid criticisms of the state's bad economic deal and regulatory laxity?

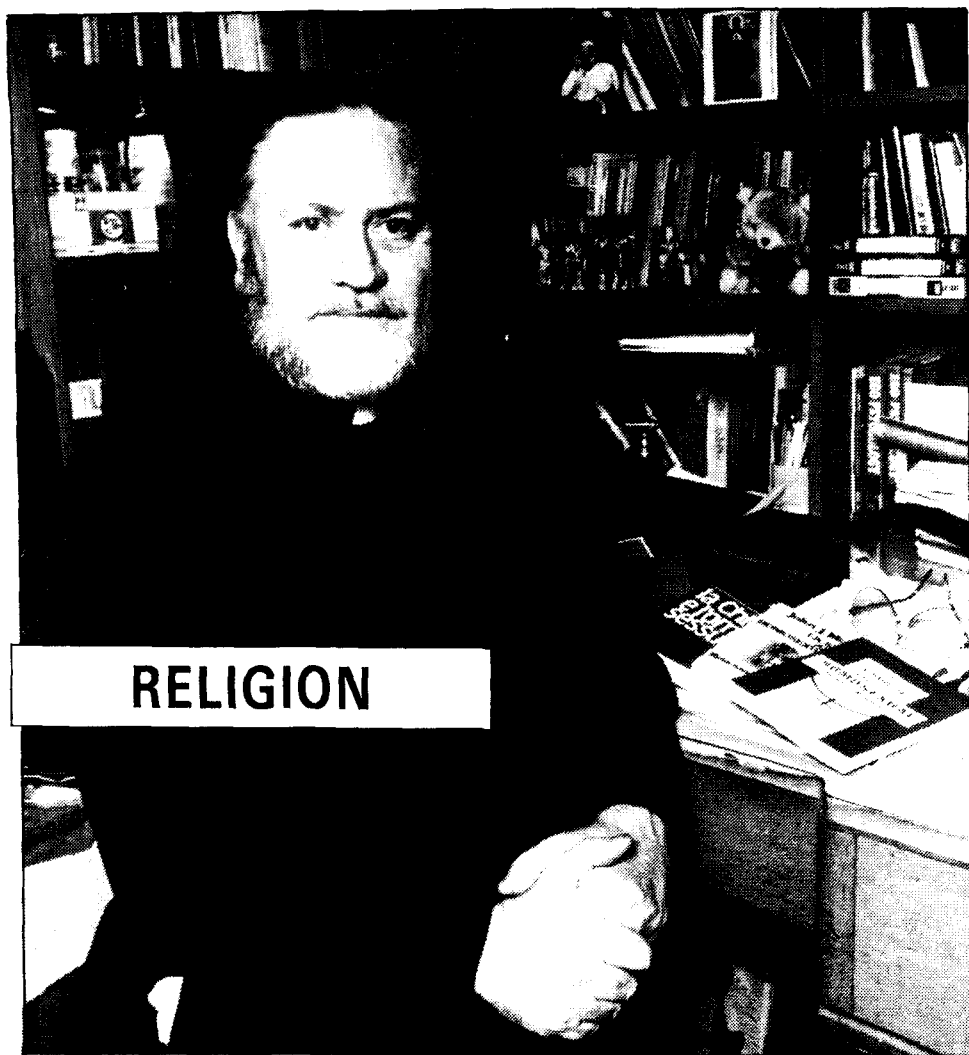
Less well known even within the labor movement is an even more promising new strategy variously called in-plant or workplace strategies. Essentially drawing on earlier labor traditions, the strategy can replace a strike as a way of pressuring management, but it can easily be adapted into a preparation for a strike, a means of winning a first contract or even political education. In-plant strategies emerged in recent years as strikes lost much of their effectiveness and were even used by management as a way to break unions.

Last week the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department publicly presented a new guide, *The Inside Game: Winning with Workplace Strategies*. Very readable but sketchy, it outlines how to set up a workplace organizing committee, research management and prepare a campaign, talk individually with workers about their needs and the campaign and building public support. As worker solidarity and awareness grows in the factory or office, the committee could call for demonstrations of solidarity (like daily rallies outside the plant gate before work or singing union songs during coffee breaks), working to rule (doing only what is absolutely required and no more, including rejecting overtime when possible or collectively calling in sick), vigorously pressing health and safety complaints with state and federal agencies, or even calling a "union day" to work particularly well, just to let the boss know what he's missing. While working without a contract, workers often can use their rights to "concerted activities" in creative and disruptive ways that a contract might prohibit, such as demanding mass meetings over a grievance.

Banner for labor: democracy first

These in-plant strategies succeed when workers are kept well-informed, when they have a strong role to play, when solidarity is maintained and when union leaders and members have direct personal relations. That might also be taken as a formula for increasing membership satisfaction with unions. In a recent study based on data from a comprehensive worker survey in 1977, Jack Fiorito and several co-authors, most from the University of Iowa, conclude that workers' satisfaction with unions is most determined by effectiveness in dealing with employers and by the way leaders handle internal union affairs. "Member-union relations...is of most importance in explaining overall union satisfaction," they write, and they argue that such findings buttress the case for more "participative management."

Rebuilding a labor movement will require many varied efforts, but it wouldn't hurt to have the lead flag in the parade say simply, "More democracy." □



RELIGION

Rev. John McNeill, a Jesuit priest expelled by the Vatican over the issue of homosexuality.

Rome rips homosexuality; Catholic gays fight back

By Beth Maschinot

LAST NOVEMBER, AFTER THE CATHOLIC Hierarchy issued a particularly vitriolic pastoral letter on homosexuality, Jim Bussen found himself in an awkward position. Usually a man who likes to work within the system, Bussen found himself at loggerheads with the Vatican. And as national president of Dignity, a Catholic gay rights group, Bussen registered his anger in media interviews.

As the controversy heated up, Bussen would go to work at the Railroad Retirement Board in Chicago unsure of what kind of reception he'd get from his fellow workers, most of whom were straight; but he was soon surprised. "There was a strong anti-Catholic backlash at work, not an anti-gay one," he says. "Some people told me, 'What the church says about gays stinks. Why don't you leave it?' But one woman said, 'Don't let them off the hook. You've got to stay and fight.' And that's what we've been doing."

In the past decade, groups like Dignity have been inching out of the church's well-built closet. The Vatican's latest, and perhaps harshest, attack on lesbians and gay men seems targeted to drive them back in. Yet it may have the opposite effect, as angry gays join other Catholics disgusted by an increasingly hard-line Vatican.

The Catholic Church's latest blast at gays is found in a pastoral letter issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in late October. (The CDF is the historical successor to the Inquisition, and John Paul II's reign has perhaps been the CDF's busiest era in this century, stamping out modern "heresies.") The document openly admits that it is out to squelch what it calls

the "over benign interpretation given to the homosexual condition, with some going so far as to call it neutral, or even good." Though the CDF doesn't name names, Catholic observers say the Vatican is out to put a stop to a distinction made in a 1976 U.S. bishops' letter between homosexual orientation (which it called "neutral") and homosexual behavior (which it called "immoral"). Dignity, New Ways Ministry and other gay advocacy groups, as well as many liberal theologians, have gone ever further than the letter. They pronounce both sexual orientations a "gift from God" and, therefore, something to be developed and integrated by the person.

The Vatican will have none of this. Written in English instead of the usual working languages of Italian or Latin, the CDF statement calls homosexuality "more or less a strong tendency ordered toward intrinsic moral evil, and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder." In other words, there will be no more tiptoeing around about "orientation vs. behavior."

Bussen and others think that the recent statement, though quite vicious, is at least consistent. "They had to go one way or the other with it, saying that either it's bad to be a homosexual and to act like one, or it's good all the way. They changed their premises to fit their conclusion."

Blaming the victims: But there were other statements beyond this theologizing that especially riled gay leaders. The Vatican took a swipe at "pressure groups" like Dignity and New Ways Ministry and implicitly blamed them for contributing to the AIDS crisis. In the Vatican's words: "Even when the practice of homosexuality may seriously threaten the lives and well-being of a large number of people, its advocates remain undeterred and refuse to consider the mag-

nitude of the risks involved." In a wonderful bit of irony, this section of victim-blaming is followed by the terse sentence: "The church can never be so callous." A Vatican spokesman gladly cleared up the vagueness of the statement by telling the Italian press that the "risks" reference was indeed to AIDS.

In what is seen as an incitement to gay-bashing, the Vatican added, "When civil rights legislation is introduced to protect behavior to which no one has any conceivable right, neither the church nor society at large should be surprised when other distorted notions and practices gain ground and violent reactions increase." Three weeks after the release of this statement, the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project said attacks against gays had doubled from 1985 to 1986 in New York City, and similar groups across the country have also noted dramatic increases in gay-bashing.

In the past month, U.S. bishops have begun to act on the recommendations of the letter, attempting to distance themselves from organizations like Dignity. Four dioceses have expelled Dignity chapters from their local parishes. More expulsions are expected as the bishops heed the spirit and letter of the document.

In some dioceses, the hierarchy is backing a group called Courage in the hopes that it will usurp Dignity's function for gay Catholics. Courage more strictly adheres to the Vatican's anti-sexuality line, calling on gay Catholics to remain celibate.

Dignity, usually given to working behind the scenes in a bid for church acceptance, has been radicalized by the church's spiraling anti-gay tenor. At a national meeting February 7, representatives from the 5,000-member group voted to fight the expulsions by picketing at local churches and by beginning a "gay dollars" campaign. If all goes as planned, parish priests across the country will soon be receiving messages in their weekly collections that say "my usual contribution of X dollars has been channelled to the lesbian and gay community."

Anti-gay actions: Though the expulsions are the precipitating cause for Dignity's action, the church's anti-gay stance in the past year has also been signalled by other events. They include:

- The expulsion of Jesuit priest John McNeill for refusing to obey an order of silence on the issue of homosexuality. In 1975

McNeill wrote *The Church and the Homosexual*, a book widely acclaimed by liberal Catholics for addressing the issue of the church's treatment of gays. Though McNeill had obeyed a 10-year ban on publicly speaking about gays in the church following publication of his book, the recent Vatican statement led him to break the ban and criticize the hierarchy's "mean and cruel spirit." As he told the *National Catholic Reporter*, "They have become very paranoid in their approach."

- The sacking of a St. Cloud, Minn., priest for airing his views on homosexuality in a diocesan newspaper. Wrote Rev. Bill Dorn, "We have a responsibility to develop a theology of sexuality that sees it as a blessing, and sees homosexuality as part of the gift." Dorn was subsequently stripped of his priestly powers; his bishop asserted that his views conflicted with those of the church.

- The push by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin to block the passage of a gay-rights ordinance in Chicago. At least five bishops have supported similar ordinances across the country and gay-rights advocates expected Bernardin, who is known as a liberal, at least to remain neutral. Bussen says Bernardin promised as much before the vote, but then "betrayed the gay community" by politicking for the bill's demise with aldermen from heavily Catholic wards.

- The recent reprisals against theologian Charles Curran of Catholic University in Washington, D.C., and Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle, Wash., which were due, in part, to their views on homosexuality.

- The lack of church response to the AIDS crisis, including recent news of priests with AIDS being made pariahs in some dioceses.

Sex and power: The recent anti-gay actions must be set in the context of an already homophobic church that's been increasingly keen on squelching dissent on sexual matters. But the changing demographics of the Catholic clergy may add a new wrinkle to this issue.

Kevin Gordon, head of the Consultation on Homosexuality, Social Justice and Roman Catholic Theology, estimates that 30 percent to 40 percent of new recruits to the clergy are gay. "When I quote that figure in talks during vocations meetings, invariably vocations directors come up and ask me why I quote such a low figure," says Gordon, a pro-

Continued on page 21

Experts say the number of gay priests is on the rise

Though dioceses are unlikely to commission any scientific studies in the near future, the number of gay priests and brothers appears to be on the rise in recent years, seminarians and clergy told *In These Times*. Ethics professor Dan Maguire of Marquette University said this trend is "not out of the goodness of Rome's heart. Rather, they've been short on priests for the last decade or so, and this is Rome's way of filling the bill."

Maguire, who was once a priest on the faculty of a seminary in the '60s, said there used to be great concern if a candidate showed "a hint of gayness. If the guy was not sufficiently athletic, he could be booted." It was only when the bishops realized they would soon have no priests that they began admitting gays.

Maguire said a friend of his was recently being recruited by an order, and he explained to the order that he was gay and did not think he could make a commitment to celibacy. Maguire said the

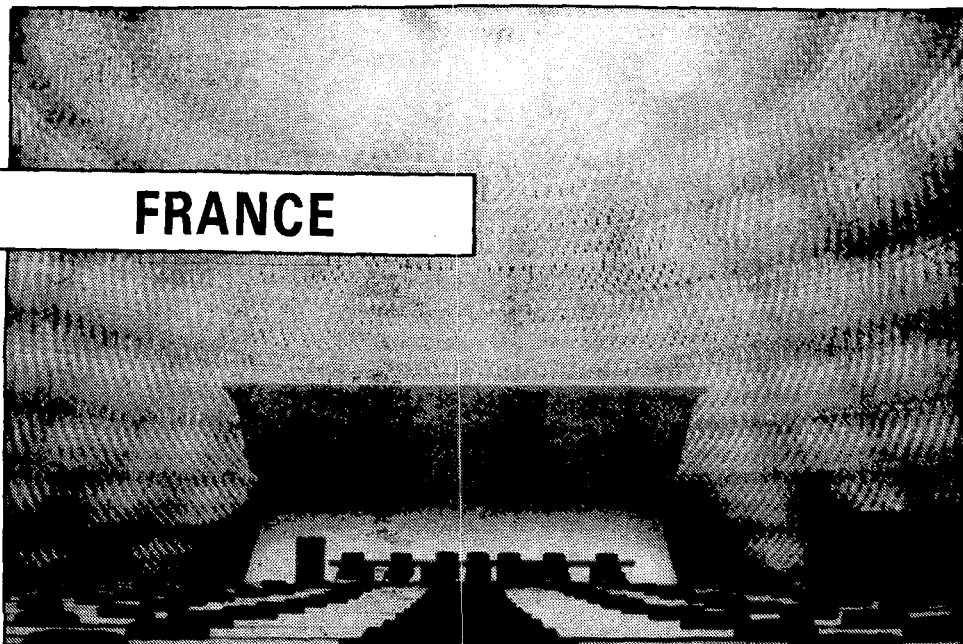
order responded to the man that celibacy meant "a commitment to the goals of the group." The man subsequently declined the invitation, saying that he was dismayed by the order's lack of integrity concerning its stated goals.

In Maguire's view, allowing gays in the priesthood also clarifies a certain rank ordering of those considered "misfits" by the Roman hierarchy. "The church will take gay men [as priests] before they'll take married men who are 'tainted' by women. Both of these groups will be preferable to women. This—and the fact that at bottom the hierarchy, like society, has a view of gay men being effeminate and therefore inferior—makes me think that at the bottom of most of this is more than a bit of mysogyny."

Maguire added that the best hope of the church would be for the hierarchy to declare a "20-year moratorium on pelvic issues."

—B.M.

FRANCE



A house divided: the French Communist Party Central Committee meeting room in Paris.

An ill French Communist Party may find remedy in 'renovation'

By Diana Johnstone

SCENES OF THE WINTER OF 1987: ON A COLD day in January, a mobile "restaurant du coeur," or soup kitchen, was parked in the market square in Pont-à-Mousson, a steel town in the eastern French region of Lorraine. With more and more people out of work, there were plenty

of customers for the free food. But the town's right-wing mayor, Bernard Guy, ordered the unsightly thing towed away.

The dynamic young Communist mayor of the neighboring village of Blénod, Michel Bertelle, 39, took the matter to heart. Rushing to the scene, Bertelle angrily tried to stop the "heart restaurant" from being towed away. In vain. Still upset, Bertelle suddenly

fell dead of a massive coronary.

Bertelle was one of the most outspoken of the "renovators," as critics of the French Communist Party (PCF) leadership currently call themselves. After the PCF fell below 10 percent of the vote in elections last March, Bertelle addressed a letter to the PCF Central Committee demanding the immediate convocation of a special party congress to "update our party's orientations, practices and leadership."

Bertelle's death raised a delicate political problem. For his post as mayor of Blénod, he was succeeded by his deputy, another renovator. But a special election has to be held next month to fill his seat on the regional council in the Lorraine department of Meurthe-et-Moselle. The local party nominated Alain Amicabile, who in 1985 was excluded from the Central Committee for his renovating tendencies. The PCF leadership balked at endorsing the heretic, but did not dare run a rival candidate.

So in the March election, Alain Amicabile will be running as "the candidate of Communists" rather than as the candidate of the PCF. This is a first, which renovators see as significant for the future of their movement.

Unlike the challenges to PCF leadership in the late '70s, the "renovator" revolt is not mainly a matter of Paris intellectuals. Critical intellectuals have already left in droves, and the Paris region has long since been taken in hand. Most of the Communist Party's Paris region troublemakers are already outside the party, waiting to see what may happen to revive the sort of party they could want to work in.

Provincial putsch: The current revolt is brewing out in the provinces, among the party's own full-time militants, who see their party's very survival threatened by its leaders' stubborn persistence in error. Criticism is particularly strong in the regional federations around the cities of Limoges, Nancy, Montpellier, Toulouse and Brest, and in cer-

called for a "cultural revolution" in the party.

Marchais's failure was confirmed last March, when the PCF's nationwide score sank below 10 percent, compared to more than 20 percent in the '70s. In contrast, Rigout's Haute Vienne gave the PCF 20.9 percent.

The renovators wanted to call a congress immediately to analyze the reasons for the PCF's steady decline and change course. But Marchais was ready with the official explanation for the PCF's poor showing: it was a result of the "general drift rightward of the electorate," expressing a profound movement of society. This is the "major obstacle we shall continue to be up against," Marchais told a post-election meeting of the Central Committee last March 25.

Society is drifting fatally to the right, leaving the PCF like a rock exposed by the outgoing tide, petrified and unmoving. This grim vision is preached with special conviction by the editor in chief of the PCF daily *L'Humanité*, Roland Leroy.

But suddenly last December, thousands of students were out in the street forcing the conservative government to back down. Leading renovator Pierre Juquin was enthusiastic: "The idea that French society has drifted to the right is completely contradicted by reality," he observed. The student movement was followed by a wave of militant strikes. The PCF, bracing itself against "society's drift to the right," did not know how to relate to these unexpected events.

Renovation or liquidation? Pessimistic and defensive, the PCF has ceased to contribute to political debate in France. The sudden student and worker movements showed that "society" has not accepted the "drift to the right," the gospel of American competitive free enterprise as preached over the media. But what else is there? The demand for a political alternative implicit in the student and worker revolts emboldened the renovators to challenge their party's paralytic leadership.

Marchais hastened to put them down. In a TV interview on January 14, Georges Marchais said the "renovators" should really be called "liquidators," because they were out to liquidate the party.

This Stalinist language set off anger among the renovators and provided newspaper cartoonists with some obvious jokes about Marchais purging Gorbachov as a party "liquidator." Marcel Rigout wrote a vigorous protest.

On January 27, the Central Committee met in Paris and backed Marchais with a resolution accusing the renovators of aiming to "liquidate what is most essential in the Communist Party." Claude Poperen, a lifelong militant in the CGT labor union at the Renault factory in the Paris suburb of Billancourt, resigned from the Central Committee in protest. A short time later, Rigout sent word from the Limoges hospital where he was undergoing an eye operation that he too was resigning from the Central Committee.

A hard blow: Although both men stayed in the party, and Rigout remains in parliament, their resignations were a worse blow to the party's self-image as a party of the working class than protests from intellectuals. Poperen represents the PCF's labor base, Rigout its roots in rural radicalism.

One of the Central Committee's last re-

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By Hillel Schenker

TEL AVIV

IS MORDECHAI VANUNU—THE MAN WHO LEAKED the Israeli nuclear weapons secret—a hero? A small group of Jewish and Arab students at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem think so. They issued a proclamation declaring: "Dear Vanunu, We're With You." Judy Zimit, his American girlfriend, compares him to Daniel Ellsberg, while his brothers Asher and Meir Vanunu say that "he did what he did for ideological reasons."

On the other hand, former member of Knesset Michael Bar-Zohar has accused Vanunu of being "the greatest traitor of the 20th century." And the Israeli government? All it did, apparently, is to send an agent to entice him off the British Isles and to kidnap him. Israel then, apparently, held him without public acknowledgement in an Israeli prison for several weeks, until public pressure—and fear of a court order—forced the government to reveal his whereabouts. It now refuses to allow Vanunu to have face-to-face meetings with his girlfriend or his family, for fear that he will reveal state secrets.

Why all the fuss? One would think that something big like the future of the world was at stake. Perhaps it is.

Nuclear Israel: Mordechai Vanunu, as readers of the October 5 edition of the *Sunday Times* of London discovered, and by now most readers of the world's media have learned, is "a 31-year-old Israeli who worked as a nuclear technician for nearly 10 years in Machon 2—a top-secret underground bunker built to provide the vital components necessary for weapons production in Dimona, the Israeli nuclear research establishment." The *Sunday Times* story, which was accompanied by pictures whose authenticity was verified by British scientists, asserted that Israel now ranks as the world's sixth-largest nuclear power, after America, the Soviet Union, Britain, France and China. The *Times* quoted nuclear scientists who believe that Israel has "at least 100 and as many as 200 nuclear weapons."

Actually, the news wasn't so new. For years it has been assumed that Israel was just "the turn of a screw" away from having nuclear weapons. Even the numbers weren't new. In *Two Minutes over Baghdad*—a book written in 1982, telling, as the cover blurb put it, "the true story of the daring destruction of the Iraqi nuclear plant"—authors Uri Bar-Joseph, Michael Handel and Amos Perlmutter noted that, "although there are different appreciations of Israel's nuclear capacities, the latest CIA reports estimate that the number of operational warheads it owns is around 200." Soon after the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, on Oct. 8, 1973, in a situation regarded as "critical to Israel's security and existence," the authors reported, "there are indications" that then-Defense Minister Moshe Dayan "gave an order secretly to put in combat readiness, for the first time, Israeli-made Jericho SS missiles, carrying nuclear warheads, as well as Kfir and Phantom bomber fighters equipped with nuclear devices. Altogether, 13 Israeli-made nuclear weapons were put on alert."

If this was so, said the authors, "it was the first time Israel had fulfilled her nuclear option." They also noted that "Israeli sources denied any rumors concerning this particular atomic alert."

The major new dimension that Vanunu added to that in the book was the fact that he had worked in the heart of the Israeli nuclear center for 10 years and had apparently taken pictures to back up his story.

Vanunu affair sparks protests against nuclear bombs in the Middle East



Mordechai Vanunu, the man who spilled the beans on Israel's atom bomb.

The Israeli government's response to the October 5 *Sunday Times* story came the following day when then-Prime Minister Shimon Peres declared at the weekly cabinet meeting that "Israel's policy has not changed and Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the region." He added that "the government is used to sensational articles on the nuclear research center in Dimona, and it prefers not to respond to them."

Normally, such a statement would signal

It's not easy to arouse Israeli public concern about nuclear dangers, but evasion is becoming more difficult.

the end of the affair, and the clamor would soon die down. But this time was different. Vanunu wouldn't simply disappear from the public conscience. Pressure from family, friends, lawyers, the media and an independent judicial system forced the government to admit that it was holding Vanunu in an Israeli prison. For the last few months, the Israeli public has been treated to a "Vanunu festival." Although the Israeli print and electronic media tend to be quite good, in the Vanunu case they have leaned toward sensationalism. Was he a misfit? A homosexual? Impotent? These are just some of the "important" questions dealt with by the media.

But beyond the sensationalized *People* magazine/*National Enquirer*-type journalism, the fact that the Vanunu affair has remained in the headlines has also kept the nuclear issue itself on newspapers' front pages. Attorney Amnon Zichroni, who is defending Vanunu, said the most important issue at stake is not the personal fate of his client, but the dangers inherent in the potential nuclearization of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

Anti-nuclear agitation: While nuclear proliferation is a major public concern in Europe and the U.S., it has barely been on the agenda in Israel and the Arab countries. Israelis' preoccupation with past scars and present socio-economic and conventional security problems has limited the impact of previous attempts to try to raise the public's consciousness about the dangers involved in the potential nuclearization of the Mideast.

In 1986 a non-partisan independent "Israeli Committee for the Prevention of Nuclear War" was established to struggle against the production, acquisition, proliferation and use of nuclear weapons; and to struggle against the nuclearization of the Mideast and to turn it into a nuclear-free zone.

Taking advantage of public interest in the

ISRAEL

Vanunu affair and the concern felt by the public in the wake of the Chernobyl disaster, the committee organized a public event in Tel Aviv on February 1 entitled "Mushroom over the Mideast?" An overflow audience heard five prominent speakers—a historian, a labor leader, a physician, a physicist and a kibbutz educator—call for an open public debate on Israeli nuclear policy. The event was chaired by Dan Sagir, a correspondent for *Ha'aretz* (the *New York Times* of Israel), who was recently one of three foreign correspondents expelled from South Africa for reporting too accurately about the apartheid regime's repression.

The evening's discussion centered not on the accuracy of Vanunu's story, but on the implications of the potential nuclearization of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Reserves Col. Meir Peil, one of Israel's leading military historians, warned that the day was soon coming when the nuclear danger would pre-empt the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the primary concern of the Israeli peace movement. He warned that a Mutually Assured Destruction deterrent policy was impossible in the Mideast, adding that if "two or three nuclear bombs were dropped on the Tel Aviv area, that would be the end of the Zionist dream, no matter how many bombs would be dropped on the Arab world. He said, "We have to be the first to call for the denuclearization of the region and to sign the international agreements for regulation of nuclear installations."

The most unexpected speaker of the evening was Yerucham Meshel, the moderate former secretary general of the Histadrut (General Federation of Labor). Clearly influenced by the degree of concern about the nuclear question expressed by the trade unions in New Zealand, Australia and many European countries, Meshel called upon the

Histadrut to take an active role in educating the public to the dangers of the nuclear age.

Dr. Ernesto Kahan, who is chairman of the Israeli branch of Physicians Against Nuclear War as well as the new Israeli Committee for the Prevention of Nuclear War, said that if each of the people present mobilized five people, and they mobilized five more people, "we would soon have a mass Israeli anti-nuclear movement."

The public evening was not the only sign of a growing Israeli interest in the nuclear question. The dailies *Davar* and *Ha'aretz* have followed *Al-Hamishmar* in publishing a series of articles on the nuclear question, and two Israeli political journals, *Politika* and *Alternativa* are scheduled to devote entire issues to the problem. Noted *Jerusalem Post* military correspondent Hirsh Goodman has called for an end to the "Israeli ostrich policy" about the nuclear question.

Despite this activity, it's not easy to arouse public concern in Israel about the dangers lurking over the nuclear horizon. Given the legacy they bear of past and recent traumas, most Israelis are probably quite comfortable with the idea that Israel is presumably the only country in the Mideast with a potential nuclear option.

A spate of recent headlines may begin to change this feeling. An *Al-Hamishmar* headline on January 25 read: "Assad Hints: Syria Is Working to Gain an Atomic Bomb!" In an interview given by Syrian President Assad to a Kuwaiti newspaper, he stated, "Many sources confirm that Israel has the ability to manufacture and use atomic bombs, and Syria has begun to act in a number of different ways in order to face this danger." Another headline in *Ma'ariv* on the same day stated: "Iran Is Planning to Manufacture Nuclear Weapons." And in a talk at Tel Aviv University on January 21, Italian Defense Minister Giovanni Spadolini warned, "Nuclear blackmail might be nearer than we think because simplified nuclear technology is within reach of terrorist groups and their state sponsors."

Clearly it is becoming harder and harder to evade the fact that the volatile Mideast is teetering on the nuclear threshold. □

Hillel Schenker is *In These Times*' Israel correspondent.

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Student revolt shakes a nation

By Anne-christine d'Adesky

MEXICO CITY

THE STUDENT MOVEMENT THAT HAS SHAKEN Mexico for the last six months has scored an important victory. On February 17 students and administrators at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) reached an agreement on how to settle a heated conflict over university reform. The agreement ends a 20-day strike by 320,000 students that had virtually closed down the university.

The two sides agreed to settle their differences through a university-wide congress that will include students, administrators and staff members. The students had been demanding a pluralistic congress to address university reform as an alternative to reforms enacted in September by the administration. Those reforms are now suspended but not repealed.

The students were jubilant at the strike's end, but they vow that the movement sparked by the walkout is far from over. "This is the first social movement of its kind in the country that has been victorious," said Cuauhtemoc Medina, a student leader. "The next step is even more complicated. We have to defend our rights within the congress and

make sure that the [administration's] reforms which are now suspended be repealed."

The student movement started here is being transformed into a national student movement involving other sectors of the university—professors, academic workers, parents—and has captured the attention of most Mexicans with extensive media coverage of its actions. That is because the issues

MEXICO

underlying the UNAM conflict are not merely academic, but economic and political ones. "What has been happening at UNAM is a microcosm of what has been taking place in the society at large," said Carlos Monsivais, a noted journalist and writer.

The university's problems—overcrowding, lack of resources, authoritarianism, a bulging bureaucracy—are felt throughout Mexican society. Thousands of people—the *damnificados*—were made homeless in last year's devastating earthquake. The present economic crisis has driven down the standard of living of most Mexicans. Overall, the prevailing mood in the country has been one of bitterness and frustration, with a strong desire for change.

Now, with the UNAM strike, a social movement has sprouted. The protesters were backed by hundreds of thousands of students, professors and academic workers who desire what Monsivais calls "greater participation in what must be a fundamental transformation of the university."

Since September 12, when the student movement began, Mexico has experienced an awakening unlike anything it has experienced since the heady days of 1968. That UNAM student movement ended in disaster when riot police massacred 700 students. The slaughter shocked Mexico and sent the country into a period of silent passivity.

A sleeping giant: At UNAM, all was quiet for 18 years. Dissident students and teachers were quickly expelled; the government worked hand-in-hand with the administration to cap any signs of unrest. Yet nothing could have prepared them for the current movement, which has caught everyone by surprise—including the students—with a brilliant campaign of negotiations, huge assemblies and marches and a decentralized strike that is notable for its commitment to democratic process and nonviolence.

Monsivais summed up the current movement: "UNAM has woken up everybody and no one is ready to go back to sleep. Since 1968, we have been asleep. There was the earthquake, then the foreign debt. Now, there is the students. They have shown everyone how to fight back, how to defend their rights with debate and intelligence. These are lessons all Mexicans must learn."

On April 16, 1986, Rector Jorge Carpizo—the head of UNAM—outlined a comprehensive program of academic reforms. His 26-

overcome these problems," Carpizo told the University Council (CU), UNAM's highest legislative body. "Right now we are compromising the students. If we don't act with great force, this could be a 'university of the masses' without quality."

After culling the university community's response to the plan, the CU approved the reforms in September, despite visible opposition by students who had just returned from summer vacation and were stunned by the proposal. The student response to the reforms was immediate and harsh: an angry denunciation of Carpizo and the CU as right-wing elitists by hundreds of students. The pupils quickly elected a University Student Council (CEU) and mapped out a defense.

Student power: CEU leaders acknowledge that university standards had declined but demand a voice in the reform process. "For us the real university reform will arise from the bases (students, teachers, workers) and not from a handful of administrators," said Guadalupe Carrasco, a CEU leader. "We don't recognize the University Council. They should repeal the measures." The student council says that the CU does not represent all sectors of the university and is biased toward the Rector. Many CU members—including Carpizo—have been hand-picked by the government, a political link the CEU claims is at the base of the reform idea. They think the administration has accepted an austerity plan like the one the government has assumed to overcome the problem of foreign debt. To the students, the relationship of the economic crisis to UNAM's steadily shrinking budget is clear.

The CEU, which now represents more than 90 percent of UNAM students, says that Carpizo is "trying to make UNAM into a more elitist and conservative institution," said Carrasco. She argues that the rector's proposal is a not-so-subtle step to weed out poor and working students.

The more the two sides have argued, the more holes have appeared in the Carpizo plan, and another, more political agenda has surfaced for the Rector.

For example, the new departmental rules will require teachers to follow a strict curriculum. "Basically, it's the administration's attempt to control what will be taught," said CEU leader Medina. Teachers and academic workers have recently joined the CEU to demand salary increases and more participation in university matters.

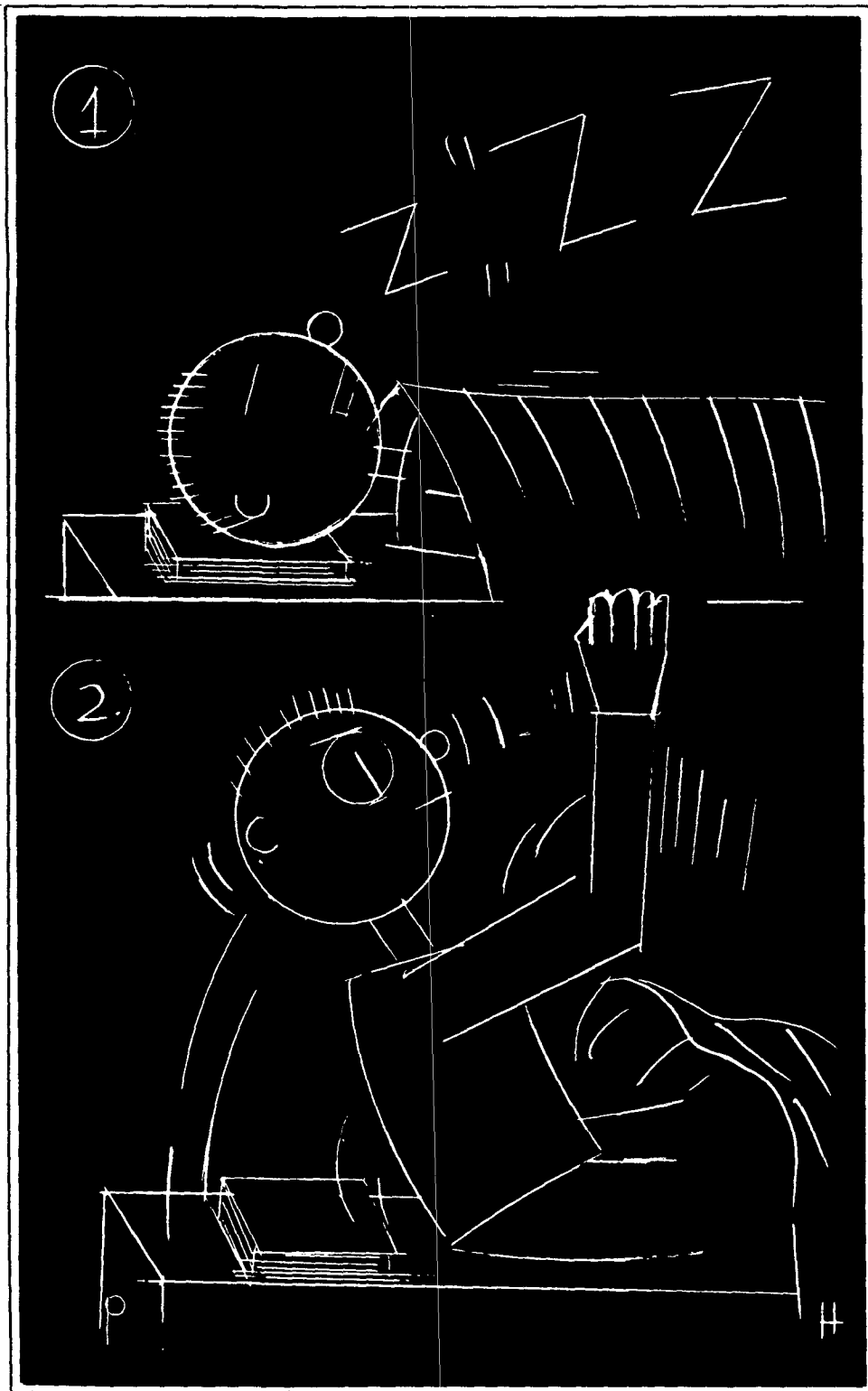
They have been supported by their counterparts in universities across Mexico. At UNAM teachers' salaries have fallen by 40 percent in real terms over the last five years, while administration salaries have doubled over the same period. The situation is even worse at universities in the provinces, where the government subsidy is only a fraction of UNAM's.

Carpizo recently adopted a 290,000-pesos budget for UNAM that he says is a 121 percent increase over 1986. But the CEU has argued that the current inflation rate of more than 100 percent chops that figure down to only a 2.8 percent increase in real terms.

The budget will be a central subject of debate in the upcoming university congress. No matter what the outcome of that congress is, gains of the student movement are already clear: the students have set an example of democratic activism that few in Mexico are likely to forget.

As Medina puts it: "I think we have given a new future to the university and to the next generation of Mexican students." □

Anne-christine d'Adesky is a Mexico City-based journalist.



The student strike ended February 17, but it will have lasting impact. One Mexican journalist says the students "have shown everyone how to fight back, how to defend their rights with debate and intelligence. These are lessons all Mexicans must learn."

point proposal addressed the most glaring problems: overcrowded classes, low standards for teaching and research, part-time attendance by students and faculty and the university's responsibility to provide quality education for all students. Carpizo based his diagnosis of the university on these staggering statistics: from 1976-85, undergraduate grades averaged 3.85 on a scale of 10. If UNAM had changed its open-admissions policy and accepted only students with grades of six or better, for instance, they would have accepted only 7.6 percent of all enrolled students.

To remedy that, Carpizo wanted to get rid of open admissions, to standardize departmental exams and to change fees for registration and university services. His proposal essentially stiffened requirements at UNAM. "We must take a position to ensure that the necessary measures are taken to

By Kevin Robinson

GUATEMALA CITY

REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE EUROPEAN Economic Community (EEC), Contadora and the Central American countries signed a surprisingly strong declaration in support of Contadora at the third EEC Central American conference here on February 9-10. Although only minor advances were added to previous economic agreements, the final ratification of existing accord by all of the Central American countries now paves the way for closer economic relations between the two regions.

Sharp political disputes and tensions overshadowed the conference's positive results, however, and a February 15 summit of Central American presidents in Costa Rica—which excluded Nicaragua—threatens to undermine the Contadora peace process. At the summit, condemned by Nicaragua as intervention in its internal affairs, the participating presidents discussed a new Costa Rican "peace plan" to "democratize" Nicaragua.

The EEC and Central America first met in Costa Rica in 1984, laying the basis for an economic accord drawn up at a second meeting in Luxembourg in 1985. Costa Rica and Panama's ratification of that accord two weeks ago, the first of its kind between Europe and Central America, is hailed as the principal achievement at the Guatemala conference.

While offering favorable trade relations with Europe, the accord promises to "substantially increase" financial assistance for regional projects that could raise industrial and agricultural production and increase trade through the Central American Common Market. Until now, bilateral aid agreements between EEC and Central American countries nearly eclipsed multilateral accords. Total bilateral EEC assistance, principally to Nicaragua and Honduras, was five times greater than multilateral aid from 1979-85, according to EEC figures.

"Initially everybody wanted financing for their own projects, but we realized that the EEC doesn't want the totals on a country-by-country basis, but rather regional development projects for Central American economic integration," Guatemalan Deputy Minister of Economy Eduardo Estrada said. "The European community believes the road to peace lies in mutual economic development and cooperation."

Despite the accord's economic benefits, however, Estrada doubts that annual EEC aid will surpass \$80 million. "If we distribute that among six Central American countries, it's a minimal amount," he somberly recognized.

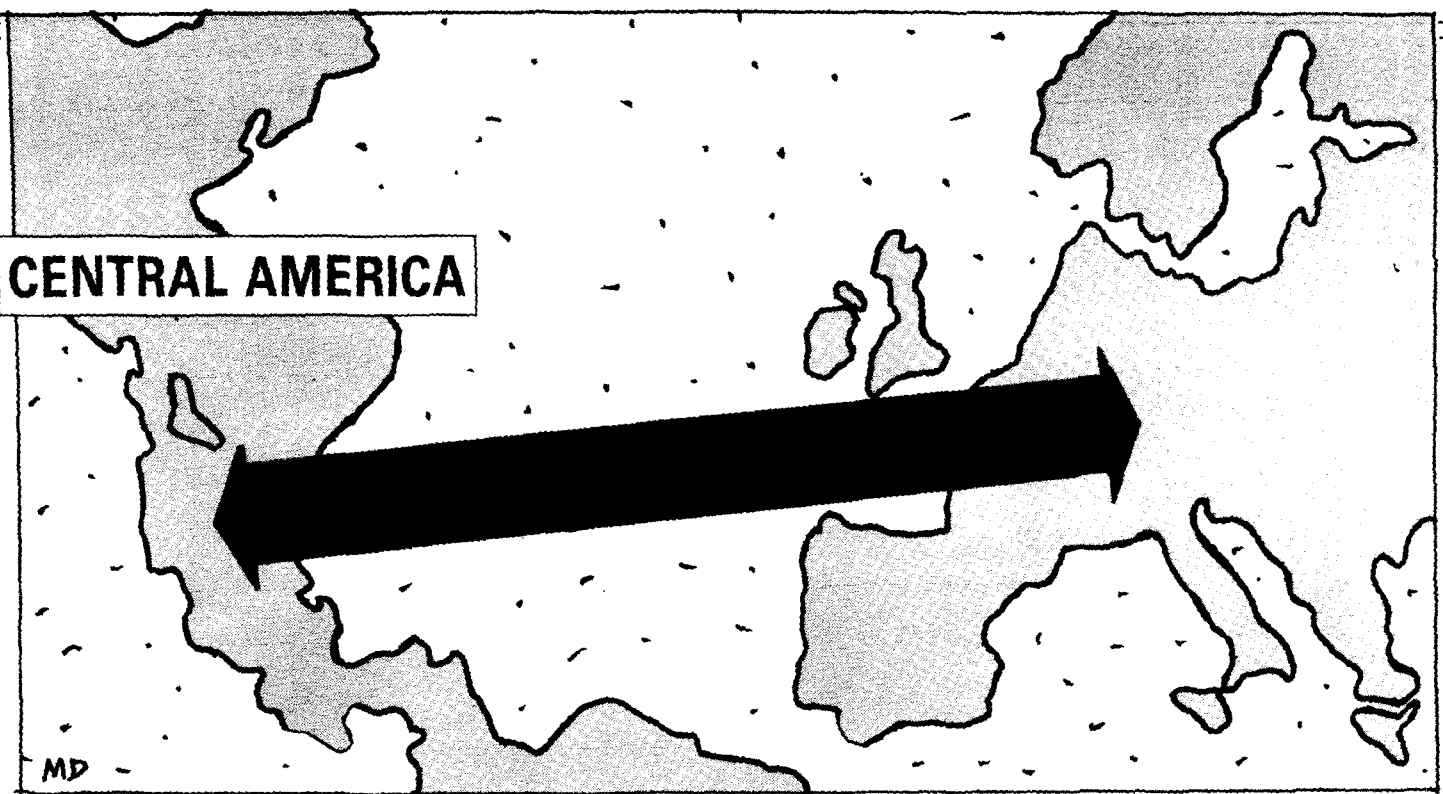
"The economic accord doesn't strike joy in the heart of anybody, since we didn't come with much to offer," commented one high-level European diplomat who requested anonymity. "Let's be realistic, the European community is involved in many areas of the world and Central America is not one of its top priorities."

The EEC's main intent is to keep the Contadora peace negotiations alive, according to the source. The conference's strongly worded "political declaration is more important than trade and aid."

Against force: Among other things, the declaration upholds the principles of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and self-determination. It rejects the use of force to resolve regional problems, backing Contadora as Latin America's "chosen means for finding solutions to the regional crisis."

Special support is offered for the creation

CENTRAL AMERICA



Europe buttresses Contadora peace plan

of a Central American parliament suggesting possible EEC aid for its formation, and calling for close future cooperation with the European parliament once it is formed. The Central American parliament, originally proposed by Guatemala, is envisioned as a regional forum where the Central Americans could discuss their grievances free from foreign intervention.

Contadora has stagnated since June, when negotiations broke down over the Central Americans' signing of a final peace accord. An unprecedented tour of the Central American republics in January by U.N. and Organization of American States (OAS) representatives, along with the eight Latin American countries in Contadora and its support group, spurred international hopes for a revival of peace talks. But the sharp political debates and tensions evident at the EEC conference underscored the U.N. and OAS representatives' affirmation that the Central American nations still lack the "political will" to negotiate a Contadora peace accord.

Six days of grueling debate among the conference's preparatory commissions over the political communique led many conference participants to predict precipitately that a political declaration would not be forthcoming. In addition, opposition by the "Tegucigalpa bloc"—Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica, the U.S.' closest regional allies who have consistently accused Contadora of partiality toward the Sandinistas—prohibited the four Contadora support group countries from participating in the conference and was viewed by many diplomats present as an effort to diminish Contadora's influence.

Behind closed doors: Moreover, on February 15 the four presidents from the Tegucigalpa bloc countries and Guatemala met behind closed doors to discuss a new Costa Rican "peace proposal" that sidesteps Contadora, calling for Sandinista negotiations with the counterrevolutionaries, followed by "free" elections in Nicaragua, in exchange for a cutoff of U.S. aid to the contras.

Although the participating presidents declined to endorse the plan—openly backed by the U.S.—as a joint petition to the Sandinistas, they called for a new meeting in Guatemala in May to include Nicaragua, where the plan would be discussed by all five Central American presidents.

Nicaragua, which firmly rejects any foreign intervention in its internal affairs, charged that

Costa Rica organized the summit under the U.S.' auspices (see accompanying story). "The meeting is the latest display of U.S. intervention in Nicaragua," read a sharp Sandinista communique, "and it's a clear act of sabotage against the Contadora peace process."

"It is not just the superpowers who have influence internationally," says a Danish diplomat.

Clearly, however, the EEC's firm backing of Contadora will help offset any peace initiatives that marginalize Contadora. "It is important that the Central American countries understand it is not just the superpowers who have influence internationally, and that the European community is taking an interest in the regional conflict," said a high-level Danish diplomat recently at the EEC conference.

The Reagan administration, which ac-

cuses Contadora of favoring the Sandinistas, appears uncomfortable with the EEC's involvement. At the first EEC Central American conference in 1984, Secretary of State George Shultz asked the EEC to exclude Nicaragua from any economic accord. The week prior to the latest Guatemalan conference, U.S. special envoy to Central America Phillip Habib met with government officials from most EEC countries.

"The letter sent by the U.S. to the European ministers in San Jose in 1984 was written in undiplomatic and inadmissible terms, although probably habitual North American language in its relations with Latin America," said Claude Cheysson, the EEC leader in charge of European Latin American relations. "This time, with Philip Habib's visit to Europe, the U.S. communicated its point of view in a more intelligent manner."

Said another European diplomat present at the conference, "Our open support for Contadora serves as an embarrassment to the U.S. They find us a bit irritating." □

Kevin Robinson is *In These Times'* correspondent in Guatemala.

Newspapers are the latest weapon in war of words

The war of words between Nicaragua and its neighbors to the north and south has heated up in recent days—this time in printed form—as a result of Nicaragua's angry reaction to the February 15 meeting of four Central American presidents in San Jose, Costa Rica, to which Daniel Ortega was not invited (see accompanying story).

In anticipation of the meeting, the Nicaraguan Embassy in San Jose took out a full-page political advertisement in the February 6 edition of *La Nacion*, Costa Rica's leading newspaper. The ad strongly criticized the governments of Costa Rica, Honduras and El Salvador for "docility manifested under pressure from the United States; docility that makes them accomplices in the interventionist policies."

The plan discussed at the meeting called for "real" elections in Nicaragua and negotiations with the non-armed opposition. The ad replied: "We do not accept that any country, much less neo-col-

onies, should pretend to give us lessons in democracy...."

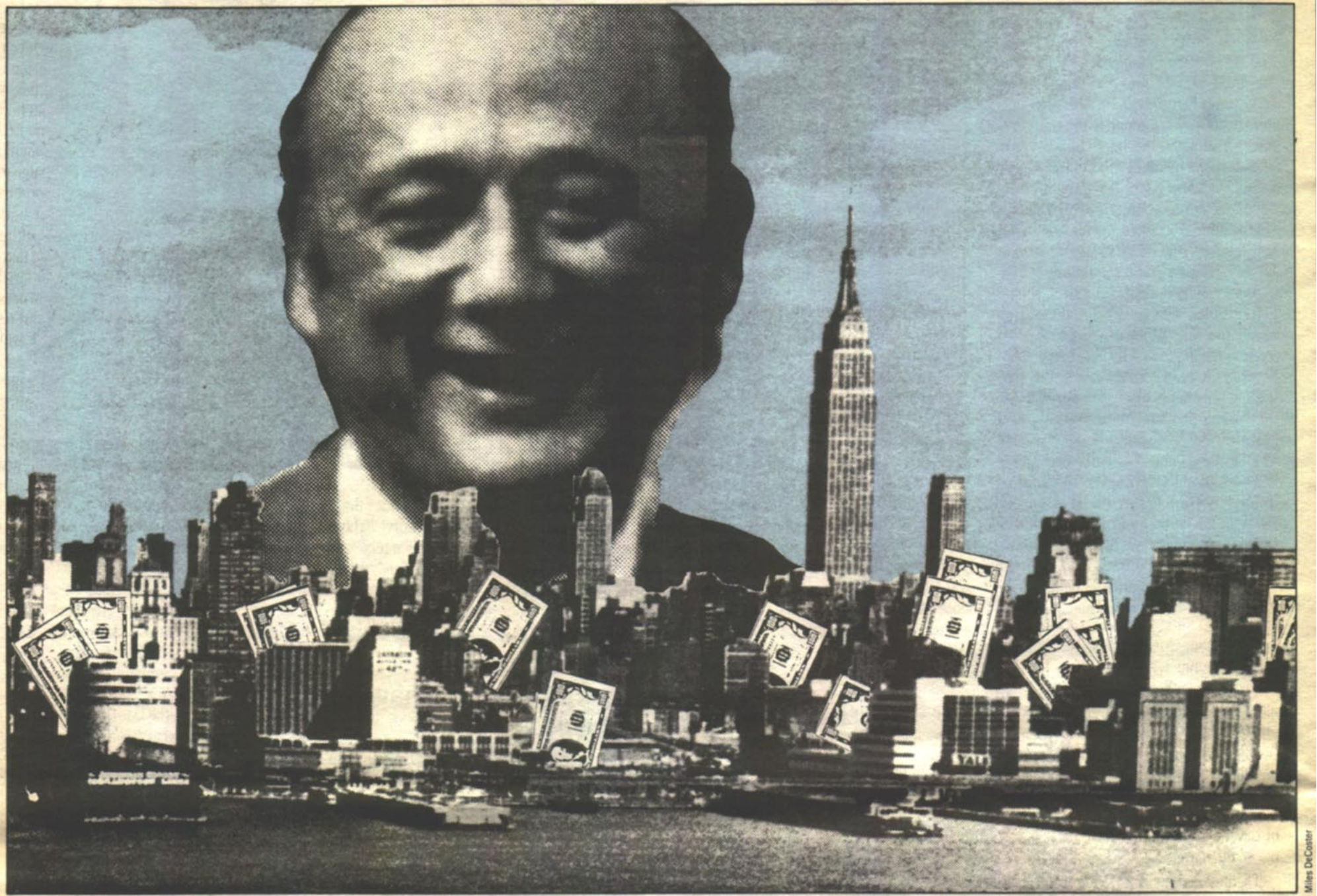
La Nacion ran the ad on page 11 of its Friday edition. It ran a disclaimer as well, on page two. The disclaimer stated that the editorial board had decided to run the ad because "we believe in free expression of ideas, a right, we should note, that is scoffed at in Nicaragua."

The next day, however, in *El Nuevo Diario*, Nicaragua's largest daily, an ad from the Honduran Embassy in Managua sharply criticized Nicaragua for its "lack of democracy and political openness." The ad ran in a prominent place on the edition's third page, seemingly refuting the Costa Rican daily's claim about an absence of free expression.

The Honduran ad called for negotiations between the Sandinista government and the contras, and new elections—two moves the Sandinistas have constantly refused to accept.

—Alan Gottlieb

KOCH REIGNS OVER KINGDOM OF CORRUPTION



By Tom Robbins

NEW YORK

MORE THAN A YEAR HAS PASSED SINCE the desperate suicide attempt on a wintry Queens highway by a top political powerbroker shocked this city into a new way of viewing itself. The ensuing series of investigations, indictments and trials has revealed that New York's corruption scandal is not just the cabal of a few greedy men, but a systemic and citywide institution that left the city's funds and resources open to plunder.

What's often referred to here simply as "the scandal" is not really one scandal but a growing number of them, some with overlapping schemes and culprits, others hatched independently within a political climate that made detection unlikely. What's given them a single title is the growing public sense, reflected in polls and the media, that at root they are intertwined: that New York's heady atmosphere of political wheeling and dealing, of multimillion-dollar campaign warchests raised from the same developers, vendors and brokers seeking contracts and favors from those they back, has created an environment that at best tolerates and in many instances encourages corruption. The breakdown in public confidence is complete as the in-house investigators and the system of checks and balances are found to have been toothless watchdogs of the public trust.

That's a mighty leap for most New Yorkers, who, in 1985, overwhelmingly re-elected Ed Koch to a third term as mayor, confident

that, whatever the mayor's flaws, he ran a tight ship. The perception then was that however much the brash-talking Koch tilted his policies toward the city's real-estate elite, or callously allowed his rhetoric and performance to offend the city's minority communities, or made his political bottom line the cultivation of his own image, his administration at least had clean hands.

It was a perception that Koch himself nourished, pointing out that even his harshest critics affirmed his personal honesty. But his own honesty was never in question. What

What's often referred to here as "the scandal" is not really one scandal but a growing number of them.

a long line of government whistleblowers, political reformers and media critics hammered away at long before the scandal erupted was that indulgence at the top allowed malleasance below.

Prosecuting army: Today's tally of the convicted, the indicted and those under investigation more than justifies those warnings. But it also makes clear that not even

a platoon of the most diligent prosecutors are sufficient to stomp out corruption. Right now seven prosecutors are working on cases arising from the scandal. Two commissions, with limited resources and authority, have already reported back with troubling findings and tentative proposals; a third—the first to have subpoena power and statewide jurisdiction—was recently created by Gov. Mario Cuomo with former Carter cabinet member Joseph Califano as its chairman. It's hoped that Califano's commission will lay bare the ground in which the scandal flourished and point the way toward far-reaching reforms.

Many scandal watchers have called for its hearings to be televised in hopes that dramatic, Watergate-style testimony will spur indignant city voters to action. There's a strong likelihood that resolutions on reforms in campaign contribution rules, independent ethics and investigation commissions and strengthened civil service procedures will be placed on the ballot this year or next. Their success will depend on an aroused public. "There's got to be a conscious effort to show there are alternative remedies if the public response isn't to lapse into cynicism and apathy," says City Council Member Ruth Messinger, who made her office a sanctuary for government whistleblowers in recent years and has spearheaded reform efforts.

In the meantime, the parade of former government officials and their alleged private sector co-conspirators on their way to trial will continue, and further indictments are

imminent. Even Koch may weary of his strategy of treating each case as an isolated incident and find a comfortable spot on the reform bandwagon. Already the scandal's revelations have hit uncomfortably close to home and shown the city's highest political bodies to be vehicles for corruption.

Manes and Friedman: The scandal's first casualty, Queens Borough President Donald Manes, was considered a likable and earnest representative of his largely middle-class borough. He and Koch would have diet contests, and Manes once playfully threw his shoe at the mayor during a meeting. He was considered a potential mayoral candidate himself.

Manes' suicide stunned the city. His initial wrist-slashing came just days after he and Bronx county democratic leader Stanley Friedman had successfully combined to name the new majority leader to the city council. And he succeeded in killing himself shortly after learning that his partner in corruption, Geoffrey Lindenauer, had agreed to become a cooperating witness for federal prosecutors. Friedman and four others were indicted on federal charges of conspiracy to bribe city officials to approve parking-ticket-collection contracts and a sham \$20 million hand-held computer device to be used by traffic enforcement agents. Convicted on the federal charges, Friedman and the others await sentencing in that case and a state trial on other charges.

Friedman, an urbane former deputy mayor under Abe Beame, stood as close or closer

to the nexus of political power in New York as did Manes. After the end of the Beame administration, he joined the law firm of Saxe, Bacon and Bolan, whose most prominent partner was perhaps the biggest power-broker of them all, the late Roy Cohn. With Ed Koch's help, Friedman lined up the votes to make himself Bronx county leader and proceeded to become a citywide kingmaker. Friedman's phone logs and date books, subpoenaed by the prosecution and released after the trial, show him to have been constantly in touch with Koch administration commissioners as well as judges, developers and religious leaders. So far-reaching was his influence that city aides called Friedman, a Jew, for help in lining up tickets to special masses at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

As an attorney, Friedman represented the taxi-fleet owners who, with his help, have sailed through the Koch administration with no legislative assault on the headlock they exercise over the industry. (Since Friedman's indictment, Koch has been pushing a taxi reform bill in the city council.) He helped super-developer Donald Trump arrange city subsidies for his projects. He took the calls from the other Democratic Party leaders and then lined up the vote of his hapless nominee on the Board of Estimate, Bronx Borough President Stanley Simon. He brokered judgeships and then named the lawyers for those judges to appoint to lucrative trusteeships.

Friedman and Manes, who also served as head of the Queens County Democratic Party, together with the county leaders of Brooklyn and Staten Island, formed the political power base that supported Koch in his mayoral elections, as well as his unsuccessful 1982 run for governor. It was a marriage of convenience that Koch justified as political savvy, since, he insists, it carried no traditional political *quid pro quo*. But in each of the major cases that have emerged from the scandal, the county leaders or their proteges figure prominently (see accompanying story).

Little political fallout: Reporting on those corruption cases has dominated the local news for the past year, ebbing and flowing in the media as new indictments are leaked or verdicts returned. But despite the widespread notoriety of the cases, little of the scandal's fallout has been felt politically.

After his federal conviction, Friedman managed to handpick his successor to run the Bronx party. He chose a lackluster state assemblyman whose chief qualification appeared to be that he had faithfully followed Friedman's orders. Manes was succeeded as Borough president by an aide, Claire Shulman, who insisted that through her eight years at Manes' side she caught no whiff of his improprieties (like public puzzlement over Reagan's professed ignorance about the Iran-contra weapons swap, the Shulman question was: which disqualified her for office more, that she knew and kept mum, or that she was oblivious to what was going on.)

And although many had said that part of Manes' temptation stemmed from his wearing both an elective and a party boss hat at the same time, Queens Democrats elected another politician, freshman Congressman and machine veteran Tom Manton, to head their party.

Nor did the scandal appear to register in the elections last fall. A Bronx state senator, Joseph Galiber, linked to organized crime and currently on trial with former Labor Secretary Ray Donovan was emphatically returned to office by his district.

The only indicator that New York's voters

may have had enough showed up in a *New York Times* poll in January that found that 55 percent of New Yorkers don't want the mayor to run for a fourth term. Those findings are a startling contrast from other polls, but the *Times* buried the item in the fifth paragraph of a story that ran on the second page of the second section. In the past, the *Times* has carried polls showing Koch's continuing popularity on the front page. The mayoral election, however, is still more than two years away, time enough for perhaps the worst of the scandal to have blown away.

Campaigning for dollars: What has been examined in a far harsher light, however, is the city's freewheeling system of campaign contributions. Previously questioned by only a watchful few, and accepted by most as a regrettable, though legitimate way to run politics, large contributions are now outright suspect. A Queens real-estate developer gave Manes an illegally high corporate contribution and was rewarded with the borough president's support for the company's exclusive right to develop a large chunk of public property.

Prior to the scandal, Council Member Messinger and state Senator Franz Leichter had repeatedly blasted the paper-thin dividing line between big campaign giving and under-the-table payoffs. Last year Leichter's analysis of contributions to the eight members of the Board of Estimate (which in-

cludes the five borough presidents, the mayor, the comptroller and the city council president; with control over the budget, city contracts and development proposals, the board carries much more political clout than the city council) found that more than half of the largest contributors had matters pending before the board prior to the election.

While those criticisms are taken far more seriously now, reforms have yet to take place. Foot-dragging in the Republican-controlled state senate last year squelched changes that would have barred contributions from those doing city business. And while Koch and Cuomo both called for reform early last year, neither has pushed their demand of late.

There is also a prevailing assumption about the scandal that has yet to be corrected: that the sweetheart deals that were cut enriched a few people, but would have been made legally anyway; that all this is really only about money. But that assumption is wrong. There's no way major city agencies and their chief executives busy feathering their own nests and those of their political bosses during the past few years could not have affected conditions in the city.

Koch's loudest boast has been that he rescued the city from financial crisis, restoring investor confidence and bringing new prosperity. Even ignoring the holes in that claim, the central issue of Koch's term has been

the increased division of New York into two cities, divided by income and race. The city's housing agency, run for six years by Anthony Gleidman, a stalwart member of Meade Esposito's Brooklyn political club, devoted the bulk of its energies to delivering and defending large tax subsidies to luxury developers. It never managed to get even a leg up on the city's worsening housing crisis, which has left 60,000 New Yorkers without homes.

The city's economic development agencies championed major development projects for some of the biggest campaign givers, and then bragged about their job-creating potential. But the agencies never bothered to find out how many jobs were ultimately created or who got them. The city's taxi commission went to bat repeatedly for fare hikes and other concessions to fleet owners, but never managed to do anything about regular taxi service in the outer boroughs, which is non-existent.

Koch can justifiably point to Reagan administration policies for accelerating the trend toward poverty and homelessness. But locally, if anyone was to mitigate the economic slide of the poor and working class, it should have been those agencies charged with doing so. What New York is learning is that they were otherwise engaged.

That's part of the ultimate social cost of the scandal, the total of which has yet to be computed. □

Tom Robbins is a New York-based freelance writer who frequently contributes to the *Village Voice*.

ANATOMY OF A SCANDAL

Here are some of the major cases in the New York City scandal:

- A sweeping investigation into the operations of a South Bronx defense contracting firm is expected to lead to indictments of two of the borough's congressmen, Robert Garcia and Mario Biaggi, as well as Borough President Stanley Simon. Officers of the firm Wedtech have already pleaded guilty to stealing millions from the company and have told prosecutors that they bribed local officials to help obtain federal defense contracts and city assistance in obtaining property.
- Meade Esposito, formally retired as head of the Brooklyn Democratic Party but still behaving like a citywide powerhouse, is widely rumored to soon be indicted for bribery of prominent Bronx Congressman Mario Biaggi. Esposito allegedly sought Biaggi's help in securing federal aid for a bankrupt ship-repair company that owed Esposito's insurance firm more than \$600,000 in brokerage fees.
- Staten Island boss Nicholas LaPorte is under investigation for using workers from a city agency to make improvements on his house. Staten Island's representative to the City Planning Commission, who was approved by LaPorte and is politically close to him, quit under fire last year because of reports that he was doing business with developers seeking commission waivers. Staten Island Borough President Ralph Lamberti was

found by the city's Department of Investigation to have pushed city development projects in which he had a financial stake. Lamberti is expected to be indicted.

- A former commissioner of transportation, Tony Ameruso, who was suggested to Koch by Esposito and approved for the post by the mayor over the objections of his screening committee, has been indicted for perjury. It was in the Transportation Department that the cottage industry of corruption in the Parking Violations Bureau festered. Because it occurred within his domain, Ameruso took the heat and resigned last year, but the mayor had his full confidence.

Later the *Village Voice* reported that Ameruso, his benefactor Esposito, as well as a Queens judge convicted of bribe-taking, and a reputed member of organized crime all owned pieces of a lower Manhattan parking lot. Ameruso, whose agency had control over aspects of the city's parking businesses, purposefully kept his investment just below the minimum required for public disclosure. When questioned about other deals, Ameruso allegedly lied, omitting his interest in another business that was in partnership with a ferry company to whom Ameruso granted a landing permit.

- The trial of ex-Taxi Commissioner Jay Turoff for bribe-taking is now underway. Also an Esposito-sponsored commissioner, Turoff ran the Taxi and Limousine Commission like a chamber of

commerce for the fleet owners represented by Stanley Friedman. Turoff allegedly ordered new meters installed in all of the city's 11,787 medallion cabs, and then conspired with directors of a small, but politically connected Brooklyn credit union to both manufacture and finance the only meter he approved as commissioner. (The credit union, in turn, siphoned out millions of depositor dollars to unsecured real-estate deals in gentrifying parts of Brooklyn, and arranged for Brooklyn Supreme Court judges to make court-ordered deposits in exchange for low-interest personal loans.) Turoff also doled out 123 free medallions (current prices reach \$100,000 each) to Queens taxi operators close to Friedman, who were supposed to use them on cabs to test diesel fuel. Turoff then lied to state investigators that it wasn't his idea, but another agency's and that it wasn't his responsibility to test the cabs' performance. He might not have wanted to: investigators found that many of the medallions were being used on ordinary gas-fueled cabs.

- In both the Bronx and Queens, grand juries are examining deals to provide cable TV service to the boroughs. In both boroughs, individuals close to Friedman and Manes were appointed to lucrative consultant positions by winning cable bidders. Despite the apparent political grease, neither borough has full cable service yet.

-T.R.

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Sham shuffling of the contra deck



Adolfo Calero

In a frantic but nearly hopeless attempt to salvage congressional support for the contras, the administration last week orchestrated yet another reorganization of the United Nicaraguan Opposition (UNO)—the third in three years. The UNO was created by the CIA and the National Security Council to provide a "liberal" front for the CIA-trained army of Somocista National Guardsmen, led by Somoza's former military attache Col. Enrique Bermudez and businessman Adolfo Calero. Calero, who along with early defectors from the Sandinista movement Arturo Cruz and Alfonso Robelo constituted the leadership of the UNO, resigned under administration pressure. But he retained his much more powerful position as head of the rebel army in Honduras, the only substantial contra military force. The move was made after Arturo Cruz had threatened once again to quit the UNO leadership unless he and Robelo were given real power over the contra movement, which has been plagued by what administration officials consider an "image problem." The problem is that

the collection of fascist thugs, whose idea of a liberating army is one that rapes school teachers and murders farmers and other civilians, has been perceived in some circles as a collection of fascist thugs, whose idea of a liberating army is one that rapes school teachers and murders farmers and other civilians. Cruz and Robelo have offered themselves as respectable window dressing for this army. Now, they insist on running it, even though it is Calero and his close ally Bermudez who created it under CIA auspices.

Desperate to recoup the possibility of renewed congressional contra support, the State Department pressured Calero into resigning, but they haven't quite repudiated him. As Department spokesman Charles E. Redman says, "there's a role for every Nicaraguan democrat who opposes what the Sandinistas are doing," and Calero's "accomplishments" especially "warrant the admiration and respect of all those who believe in freedom." Conservatives agree with this kindly assessment of Calero, but they have a more honest view of Cruz and Robelo. As Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) observed, Calero is "the only person within UNO who truly represents the freedom fighters." The others, he says, "are subservient to the State Department."

Meanwhile, as right-wingers squabble over who best represents their efforts to overthrow the elected government of Nicaragua by force and violence, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has approved a bill to cut off all aid, public and private, to the contras and to give \$300 million in economic aid to Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador. A similar bill has been introduced in the House by Rep. Bruce Morrison (D-CT) and two other Connecticut House members, one a Democrat and one a Republican. Both bills would also prohibit the administration from facilitating such contra aid in any way, including aid from third countries. And it would stop the \$40 million that remains from last year's \$100 million allocation to the contras, though it is probably too late to achieve this end.

"There's an emerging consensus in Congress," an aide to Morrison says, "that support for the contras is bad policy." And a perception that among our Latin American neighbors, "the United States is the odd man out in insisting on armed conflict as the solution for Nicaragua."

Amen.

Feckless welfare reform proposals

These days nobody likes the American welfare system. Those on the right see it as the cause of the breakup of families and a self-perpetuating cycle of illegitimacy and government dependency. Those on the left see it as a system that perpetuates poverty and degradation.

Talk of welfare reform is in the air, and most of it is about some form of work for payments, or workfare. Among politicians a consensus is emerging that welfare reform is on the agenda (see *In These Times*, Dec. 24, 1986). States from California to New Jersey are experimenting with work requirements, while Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) sees in all this an analog to a "rare alignment of the sun that causes all manner of natural wonders."

The welfare reformers' main target is Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which last year dispensed an estimated \$15.8 billion to 3.7 million families comprising 11 million people. AFDC is said by some to be responsible for perpetuating a culture of poverty, in which single parents—overwhelmingly women—with dependent children are encouraged to stay on the welfare rolls, rather than to enter the workforce. As some see it, AFDC says to women, "Have a kid and the state will take care of you—as long as you don't live with the father." To men, AFDC allegedly says, "Father children and the state will take care of you."

Reaganites, of course, see this program as encouraging welfare cheaters and as rewarding laziness, even suggesting that lazy teenagers, mostly black, have children in order to enjoy the generous benefits of AFDC. But the growing political consensus among liberals that something has to be done about AFDC is not based on this theory. Rather, it is a reaction to the constantly increasing numbers of people now dependent on such aid—to the growth of a seemingly permanent underclass.

Workfare is supposed to be a solution in that its aim is to bring welfare recipients back into the workforce and to train them in habits of working for a living. As Micky Kaus put it in a recent *New Republic* article, the goal is "the work ethic state." In his scheme,

which is an extreme extension of the current workfare laws and proposals, everyone needing aid would be offered work—at something less than the minimum wage. Those who were not physically disabled who refused work would be out of luck. Welfare as we know it would be eliminated. Kaus' draconian proposal has no chance of being adopted, but it shares an underlying principle with the plans that are under consideration, as well as a basic fault. All of the current plans aim to reduce welfare dependence, but do nothing to reduce poverty.

The idea of work for all is fine in a society where work is productive and is the means to a life of comfort and social utility. But during the Reagan years, from 1979-1984, the number of working poor grew dramatically. Two-thirds of all jobs created in those years paid less than \$7,000 per year, well below the poverty line, while industrial jobs at union wages (more than \$28,000 per year) declined in number. Workfare programs, by bringing millions more into the workforce at below minimum wage standards would only tend further to undercut wage standards and increase the number of working people living in poverty.

The problem is not welfare dependency per se—that is a consequence of a larger problem, the growing inability of our society, especially in the absence of government intervention, to provide productive work at living wages to those able to work. Forcing people now on welfare to work is like trying to squeeze a gallon of water into a quart bottle.

The solution in post-industrial America cannot be poverty wages. It can only be the creation of millions of socially useful jobs in such things as government financed community health care programs, massive extension of educational programs from pre-school through university, and, in general, a vast expansion of work on infrastructure, cultural activities and recreation. In short, a genuine welfare state in which working would not be a punishment but an opportunity to lead a life of dignity and security.

Deng's reforms as they are viewed in Japan

By Yukinori Ishikawa

MODERNIZATION IN CHINA SEEMS A RECKLESSLY pragmatic experiment. Beijing's open-door policy and economic reforms through the use of Western-style technology and limited free-market mechanisms have turned the economy around. Between 1981 and 1985 production grew at an average 11 percent annually, trade at 12.8 percent, and construction investments at 12.8 percent. The shortage of foreign currency aside, there were no signs of turmoil until recently.

A student demonstration in early December at the prestigious University of Science and Technology at Hefei, the Chinese version of MIT, triggered a wave of "pro-democracy" protests that eventually spread to a dozen major cities, including Beijing, across China (see *In These Times*, Jan. 28). Not all students, however, were politically motivated. Some of the demonstrations were reportedly staged in demand for everyday needs like more shower facilities or in protest against proposed tuition hikes. The question is whether the marches were spontaneously formed or politically designed.

Japanese sinologist Mineo Nakajima regards the student movement as more complex and more significant than it may appear. He said in a recent magazine interview: "The Deng Xiaoping regime is not having a smooth sail. Economic reforms, which may be considered too radical by some accounts, are taking a drastic 180-degree turn from the Maoist model, and that is creating strains. The apparent antagonism [within the Communist Party between reformists and conservative left-wingers] overlaps with the student movement."

Kazuko Mori, a chief researcher at the Japan Institute of International Affairs, points out that there are three lines of thinking in the Communist Party. First, the liberals, including ousted Hu Yaobang, call for economic and political reforms. Secondly, the orthodox hardliners give priority to planned economy over market economy, and believe in the party's leadership in political affairs. The third group, led by Deng Xiaoping, supports economic reforms through the open-door policy but does not promote political reformation.

The decision on Hu's resignation from his post as the Communist Party's general secretary was said to have been made at the January 16 Politbureau meeting, which was also attended by senior members of the Central Advisory Commission (CAC). Semiretired CAC members usually do not take part in Politbureau meetings, but the urgency of the matter probably compelled them to take action against advocates of "bourgeois liberalism." Quoting Soviet and East European sources, the Japanese daily *Mainichi Shimbun* reported that Hu's discharge was also prompted by fears in the Chinese leadership that the demonstrations could get out of control and eventually evolve into a social unrest reminiscent of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and, most recently, Poland.

That scenario was not totally unfounded. An excited Shanghai worker reportedly overturned a car during the four-day demonstration in late December. Some workers also in Shanghai refused to go to work, saying that the demonstration disrupted public transportation. A Japanese journalist in Beijing reported: "Now, some are voicing the opinion that they [workers in Shanghai] would rather support the Gang of Four or former Chairman Hua Guofeng. They are also criticizing Hu Yaobang, Deng Xiaoping and the Communist Party." After all, Shanghai was home to the Gang of Four.

The Shanghai Municipal Committee then

informed Beijing that the situation there was getting serious. The message instantly evoked a sense of growing crisis in the Communist Party's conservative faction. Deng also took the developments in Shanghai as a potential threat to his economic reforms. Deng, according to this theory, therefore decided to sacrifice his heir Hu to the conservatives and crack down on liberals to save his pragmatic goal. Fang Lizhi, vice president of the University of Science and Technology and an outspoken defender of political liberalization, along with author Wang Ruowang and journalist Liu Binyan, was expelled from the party.

In the wake of Hu's resignation Deng told Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe's visiting prime minister, that the open-door economic policy would not jeopardize China's socialist system because the so-called four cardinal principles (the Communist Party's leadership, the socialist road, the dictatorship of the people and Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought) continue to be upheld. He report-

edly added that the country's errors "in the past several years" were due to "demanding too much, moving too fast and deviating from China's actual conditions." In other words, that appears to mean that economic reforms would continue, though at a slower pace. But the Chinese leadership has not answered any of the troublesome questions raised by pro-democracy students and intellectuals.

The introduction of free-market mechanisms, it seems, is bound to bring in mammonism and other capitalist values. It is hard to imagine how in the world Deng's cherished economic reforms can be compatible with the four principles. How socialist liberalism within that cardinal framework will be different from bourgeois liberalism remains a puzzle. Deng's pragmatism may not be an answer, but there is nothing else in sight.

Yukinori Ishikawa is *In These Times'* correspondent in Japan.

China's socialism is breaking new ground

By Marc Blecher

CHINA'S REFORMERS NOW FACE A SERIOUS contradiction. Their economic reform program depends at bottom on rapid development of the economy, a basic condition for which is political stability. In any economy, capitalist or socialist, rapid growth cannot proceed amidst political turmoil, strikes and other disruptions. The recent student demonstrations for political reform were seen as harbingers of wider disruptions among other social groups who will be negatively affected by the economic reform program. In October 1986 a major reform of the labor system was put into effect, under which workers are no longer guaranteed jobs for life, or even retirement pensions. Instead, they will work under annual contracts, which can be cancelled, leaving the workers unemployed. China has a serious labor surplus and the state cannot guarantee a job to every worker. In December, a controversial bankruptcy law was passed, providing a way for the state to close down inefficient or loss-making firms, which puts their workers in danger.

Moreover, in the next few years firms will be threatened with the effects of a broad-gauged economic restructuring. Many inefficient firms have made profits for years—even decades—because of irrationalities in China's state-controlled pricing system.

In November I visited a small rural rolled steel mill in Sichuan that started operations in March of this year and already claimed

to have recouped its investment. Plant officials admitted this had nothing to do with efficiency—the equipment was old and workers inexperienced—and everything to do with the mill's inputs and capital being priced too low and its output too high. A long-mooted price reform slated for implementation this year will basically deregulate controlled (and irrational) prices of basic inputs such as iron ore, raw pig iron and coal. The effects of this change, if implemented, will ripple seriously but unpredictably throughout the Chinese economy, causing many enterprises like this one to suffer and perhaps even close. Workers will see wage cuts or layoffs.

The likelihood that they will take their discontent to the streets is only increased by the presence of students already demonstrating there. The effect on the reformers' plan for rapid growth could be devastating. Thus even Party leaders favorable to economic reform had to shut down the student demonstrations, while still proclaiming support for the reform of the economy. This is the position taken by Premier and now Acting Party Chairman Zhao Ziyang, an early and bold economic reformer.

In their suppression of demands for political reform, economic reformers like Zhao were joined by those Party leaders who have long had grave doubts about economic reform. These old Leninists used the opportunity presented by the student demonstrations, and the tactical alliance with economic reformers that this produc-

ed, to go on the political offensive and attack the reforms and reformers. Thus, within barely a week of the announcement of Party Chairman Hu Yaobang's fall for political mistakes in fostering an environment of political liberalization, it was being openly rumored by high officials in Beijing that no less important a reform economist than Yu Guangyuan is to be next. The agenda has shifted rapidly from politics to economics.

Political crises can be managed in the short- or medium-run, as we know from looking at South Africa, to name just the most extreme case. But their underlying material bases will not go away. The economic and social contradictions involved in reforming a centrally planned economy that guaranteed employment, inexpensive housing and food, and retirement benefits to its working class and sinecures to its leading officials into one that puts workers at the mercy of unpredictable markets and officials on the sidelines have never before played themselves out. History has no lessons in the ways they will find political expression. Once again, Chinese socialism is breaking new ground. The country, which for two millennia had the world's longest-lasting empire and associated social and economic system, has again become a great iconoclast and innovator. One can only watch in awe.

Marc Blecher is an associate professor of government at Oberlin College.

SYLVIA



the RATINGS WAR
between DONAHUE
AND OPRAH WINFREY
CONTINUES TO HEAT
UP. TODAY DONAHUE
TALKS TO A GROUP OF
FOOT FETISHISTS
AND their ex-WIVES...

Nicole Hollander

by Nicole Hollander



TOMORROW OPRAH
WINFREY interviews
A GROUP OF SPACE
ALIENS WHO HAVE
SAID "No" TO
SPACE TRAVEL.

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Soviet dissent has taken many forms

By Ludmila Alexeeva

SOVIET DISSENT AS IT EVOLVED IN THE middle '70s was more than a movement for human rights. Although observers have tended to equate dissent and human rights agitation, dissidents challenged a gamut of civic aspirations in opposition to official ideology and politics. These included movements among various Soviet nationalities for the preservation of their own cultures in the Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Georgia, Armenia and also an ethnic Russian movement, and peoples like Crimean Tatars who were fighting for the right to return to their homelands, from which they had been deported by Stalin during World War II. Jews and ethnic Germans also struggled for the right to emigrate to Israel and West Germany. Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, Catholics and Orthodox Russians demanded freedom of religion. The dissidents also included democratic socialists fighting for general social and economic rights. This kaleidoscope of various struggles differed in their aims and scale, often seeming to have little in common.

The separateness of these movements can be explained by lack of information about each other. Official propaganda constantly massages into people's heads visions of "solidarity and the monolithic character of Soviet society," "friendship among the peoples," their "unity around Party and Government." Under such conditions, Lithuanians, for example, who know the problems of their own nationality and Catholic Church, know nothing about the problems of Ukrainians, although they are similar.

But lack of information is not all that stopped the development of grassroots solidarity. National and religious feelings and ideas, which gave special internal cohesive-

ness to each of these movements, were not conducive to solidarity. No single nationalist or religious movement was able to unite all others.

In the Soviet Union the link that unites everybody cannot be religious or nationalist. It can only be secular. That's why the movement for human rights has become the leading dissident tendency.

The main function of Soviet human rights activists in the '70s was the collection and publication of information about violations of human rights. The defense of these rights, without regard to nationality, religion or political beliefs, was its moral foundation. The movement's main publication was *The Chronicle of Current Events*, which started publishing in 1968. This samizdat (clandestine publication) served as a medium for all dissident tendencies, enabling them to transmit information to the West, from where it was broadcast back into the Soviet Union via radio, informing dissidents of one tendency about the doings of others. In 1976, in the wake of the signing of the historic Helsinki Accord and creation of the Moscow Helsinki Group to monitor Soviet compliance, other national groups were created. Helsinki groups appeared in the Ukraine, Lithuania, Georgia and Armenia. Numerous other groups to defend the rights of believers also sprang up. Besides now having a center in Moscow these groups had something else in common. All now saw the minimum human rights requirements established by the signatory nations as their own. The method to achieve these aims was non-violent struggle within the framework of the Soviet constitution and the international obligations the Soviet Union had undertaken with regard to human rights.

Soviet authorities were so unnerved by the quickly growing dissident community that even a loss of international prestige

did not stop them from brutal persecution of the Moscow dissenters. Later they extended persecution to all human rights activists, the majority of whom ended up in labor camps or were forced to emigrate. Soon, only scattered individuals, under constant threat to their lives, dared to continue the collection and dissemination of information about human rights abuses. Contacts between dissidents fell apart.

According to my calculations, the number of people that took an active part in various dissident activities during the decade of the '70s approached 500,000, the vast majority in nationalist and religious movements. Human rights and democratic activists numbered only a few thousand, but their influence far exceeded their numbers.

Ethnic Russians: What is the potential among ethnic Russians for acceptance of democratic ideals? There is a widespread belief that ethnic Russians are not predisposed to democracy. In this regard it is interesting to note two unofficial surveys taken in 1980 and 1981.

In 1980 a team of 53 people, led by sociologists, secretly questioned 853 individuals on their attitude toward Andrei Sakharov, who symbolized the ideal of an activist for human rights. Those questioned lived in Moscow, its suburbs and several other large cities. They included blue- and white-collar workers, intellectuals and party bureaucrats. Sixty percent of those questioned refused to answer, claiming insufficient information about Sakharov. The other 40 percent split into two equal groups, one viewing Sakharov's activities negatively, the other supporting him. About the same results were registered in a 1981 survey of 618 people with regard to Polish Solidarity. The fact that 40 percent of those questioned were aware of Sakharov and Solidarity, and half of those were sympathetic, points to a failure of official propaganda.

Bad days: After the destruction of the human rights movement, xenophobia increased. Ethnic Russian nationalists swung to the right as the imperialistic element among them gained ground. Within religious movements, isolationism won.

But as the number of open protests went down, the number of potential dissidents did not. Authorities were able to repress national movements in the Ukraine, Lithuania, Georgia and Armenia, but activities of Latvian and Estonian nationalists increased. In addition, an awakening of national consciousness among Muslim peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia has occurred, while in the European part of the Soviet Union a new form of civil dissent appeared—the independent movement for peace, which rapidly became a part of the international peace movement.

During the '80s dissent became polarized and politicized. Human rights activists, who as a matter of principle were apolitical, were squeezed from one side by Russian nationalism and from another by democratic socialism, once again on the rise after a fall in the wake of the destruction of Prague in the spring of 1968.

New wave: During the '80s Russian nationalists and democratic socialists in-

creased their numbers not only among active dissidents, but on all levels of Soviet society, including those in power.

Attempts to create underground social-democratic parties were made in Moscow and Latvia. In 1982 democratic socialists made an attempt to create a federation of democratic forces of socialist orientation. There were more than a dozen documents and programs published clandestinely by various underground socialist groups. At the same time various right-wing tendencies like national-Bolshevism, Stalinism and fascism also intensified. National-Bolsheviks and Stalinists have their own semi-official clubs and make wide use of official cultural centers and voluntary societies. In several large cities and the republic of Estonia, young fascists openly demonstrated on Adolf Hitler's birthday.

Polarization and politicization of opponents of the regime is taking place against a backdrop of massive departure of Soviet people from the official ideology and the spiritual hunger it creates. Thousands of official and semi-official associations are being created—rock groups, home theaters, seminars on the occult, religious communities, traditional and exotic self-study circles of the Bible, Hebrew, English, Russian history, literature, music and God knows what else.

Gorbachov's call for *glasnost* (openness) was the key demand of human rights activists. In 1970 Andrei Sakharov, Roy Medvedev and Valentin Turchin offered support on this issue in a letter to Brezhnev. There was a note to Brezhnev from Sakharov in 1972, an open letter by Yuri Orlov to Brezhnev in 1973 and the famous "Letter to Leaders of the Soviet Union" from Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Dialogue between the authorities and society—now offered from above—may be fruitful, because Gorbachov and his colleagues are basing their projects on ideas born in society and discussed in samizdat during the last 30 years.

These ideas have now entered the official press. The paradox of the present period taking the ideas for their projects from samizdat while the authorities continue to hold some authors and distributors of these same ideas in prisons, is apparent to all.

It is too early to say which tendency of Soviet dissent will have the biggest influence among the Soviet leadership. In its economic reforms one can sense more the influence of democratic socialists. Andrei Sakharov's triumphant return to Moscow testifies to acceptance of the liberal ideology by people in positions of high authority. Yet Soviet authorities are still oriented toward ethnic Russians. Other Soviet people don't feel this "liberalization." The present Soviet leadership still ignores their interests or is openly hostile toward their aspirations. No improvement has occurred in the treatment of those practicing religion. If anything there is some worsening of official attitudes toward the Russian Orthodox Church and Muslims.

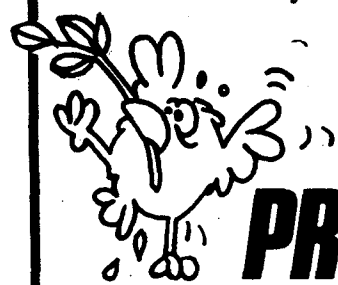
Ludmila Alexeeva, one of the founding members of the Moscow Helsinki Group, currently lives in New York. She is the leading historian of post-World War II dissent in the USSR. She is author of *Soviet Dissent*. This article was translated by Alexander Amerisov, who publishes the *Soviet-American Review*.

ARAFAT'S PLO RECOGNIZES ISRAEL

The PLO has in fact stated it recognizes all UN resolutions pertaining to Israel and Palestine

MANY ISRAELIS SUPPORT A PALESTINIAN STATE ALONGSIDE ISRAEL

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FREE TRIAL ISSUE
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By John J. Kulczycki

FOLLOWING DEPUTY SECRETARY OF State John C. Whitehead's recent visit to Poland, the Reagan administration is contemplating lifting economic sanctions imposed in reaction to the declaration of martial law in December 1981 and the crushing of the Solidarity Trade Union by the authorities, supposedly at the behest of the Soviet Union. Some sanctions were removed in 1983 after martial law ended, but the remaining ones—the denial of U.S. credits and most-favored-nation trade status—are crucial for the ailing Polish economy.

Last August the U.S. and the Soviet Union announced the signing of 13 exchange agreements with the goal of restoring cultural, health and educational contacts to what they were prior to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979. In addition—though out of consideration for the farm vote rather than for foreign policy reasons—the Reagan administration proposed subsidized grain sales to the Soviet Union, an offer later declined. Thus, more than six years after the imposition of martial law, the people of Poland are left in their misery to contemplate the paradox of U.S. concessions to the country blamed for their condition while they continue to suffer the consequences of sanctions.

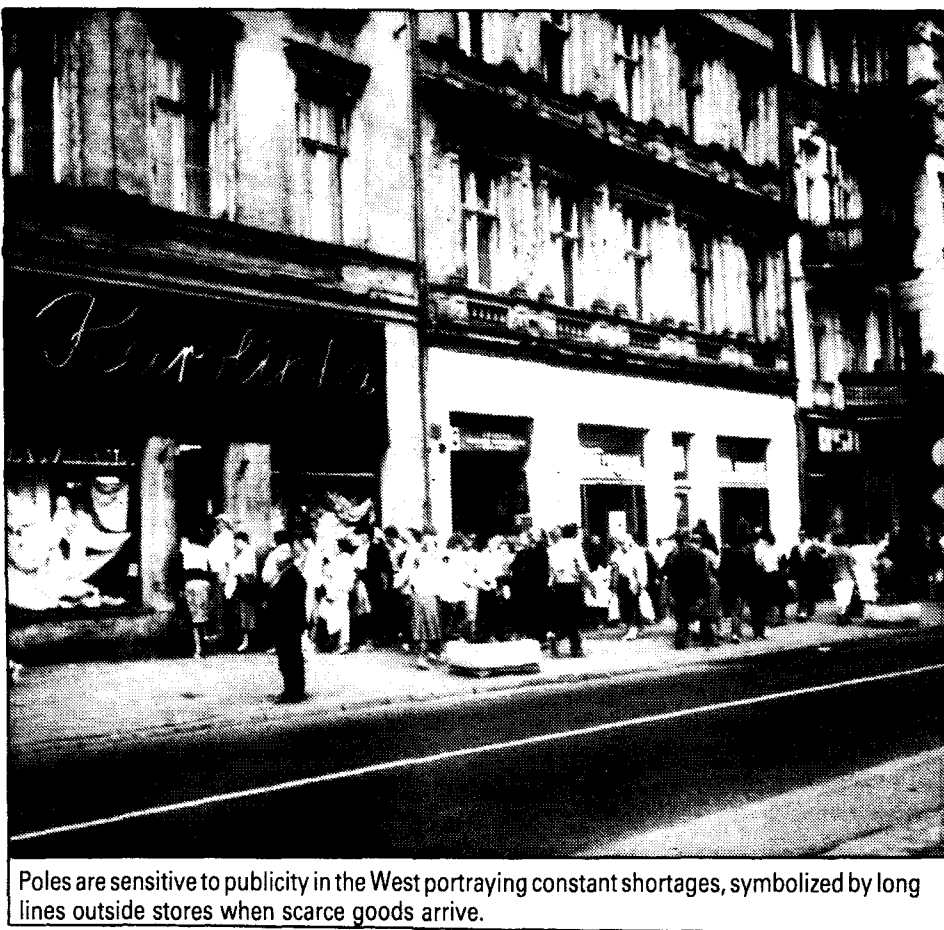
The Polish American Historical Association (PAHA), a national organization of scholars interested primarily in Polish immigrants to the U.S.—and most of them descendants of these immigrants—last summer took the first step in renewing cultural contacts with Poland that officially have not existed since the imposition of martial law. In July members of PAHA took part in a conference in Krakow, Poland, co-sponsored by the Polonia Research Institute of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.

Suspicion: At first PAHA greeted the Polish initiative for the joint conference with suspicion. The proposal came from Professor Hieronim Kubiak, a former director of the Polonia Research Institute and, more importantly, a former member of the Polish Communist Party's Politburo during martial law. And it came in the fall of 1985, when the authorities in Poland were carrying out a major purge of administrators of universities and other institutions of higher learning.

Under the circumstances, Professor Stanislaus Blejwas of Central Connecticut State University, then president of PAHA, opposed participation in the conference. But the majority of PAHA's members favored accepting the invitation—after formally protesting the actions taken by the authorities against Polish universities and insisting that the conference not be turned to political purposes by the Polish government.

Was this merely a face-saving maneuver to rationalize a trip to Poland? Formally, the conference was organized to mark the 60th anniversary of the Kosciuszko Foundation, an American institution that more than any other has fostered cultural exchanges between Poland and the U.S. At issue here was the purpose of cultural exchanges and their relation to politics. Even when two governments adhere strictly to the terms of agreements that promote scholarly contacts and the dissemination of culture, political considerations cannot entirely be avoided.

But in this case, Polish scholars, even those most opposed to their own government's



Poles are sensitive to publicity in the West portraying constant shortages, symbolized by long lines outside stores when scarce goods arrive.

Poles seek expanded contact with the West

policies, had nothing to gain from continued isolation from the West. One told me—when asked about the propriety of American participation in the conference—that the severance of contacts with Western scholars and cultural institutions only deepens their misery, adds to their losses.

Nor are these losses only on one side. At the conference's inaugural session, Blejwas, who went along with PAHA's majority, insisted on the importance of freedom of inquiry—perhaps more than necessary, considering the Polish propensity to read between the lines and the desire of every bona fide Polish scholar for the same freedom of inquiry. But he also asked if we Americans had not lost something during the long break in cultural relations with Poland, implying that we had. The open and friendly spirit that prevailed throughout the conference, to say nothing of the usual Polish hospitality that accompanied it, led participants on both sides to the conclusion that PAHA's decision to come to Krakow had been right, and that future contacts and exchanges should follow.

This is especially true now that the Polish authorities have freed virtually all political prisoners, including the leading figures of the Solidarity movement. This development seems to vindicate the U.S. policy of maintaining economic pressure through sanctions, but even if so, its continuation is difficult to justify. For some time now, Ronald Reagan has had few more enthusiastic supporters than those among the people of Poland. In large part, his popularity stems simply from an elemental response based on an old principle of East European politics: the enemy of your enemy is your friend. From the very beginning of his administration, Reagan has made clear his enmity to the Soviet Union. Polish fans of Reagan will above all tell you that he says the things they long to hear said about the Soviet Union.

Another part of the explanation lies in the traditional Polish view of America. Despite all the changes of recent years in the U.S., including high unemployment and barriers against new waves of immigrants, for many Poles the U.S. remains the land of freedom and opportunity. Even Poles who come here and find out otherwise are reluctant to contradict the myth to those that remain at home. Too many Polish immigrants have made it in America—or seem to have—for most Poles to believe that anyone who really tries cannot succeed.

View from Poland: Not only have Poles seen immigrants return to Poland with pockets full of dollars, they also have the word of their government how bad things are in America, which for most of them is *prima facie* evidence of how good things must be. Typically, Poles do not believe that the number of homeless in the U.S. has grown, unless they want to be homeless. Since the Polish media emphasize dissatisfaction

among blacks in America, many Poles, in their ignorance, mouth racist attitudes: if blacks are dissatisfied in the land of opportunity, where the streets flow with milk and honey, then they must be simply lazy or inferior. Little wonder that so many Poles love Ronald Reagan!

But the love affair has lost some of its bloom lately. Before the imposition of martial law, when the threat of a Soviet armed intervention loomed over Poland, I remember Poles telling me that they did not fear an invasion: "Reagan wouldn't let it happen." Now there are fewer illusions about the protection Reagan offers. Even his rhetoric has been diluted. Meanwhile, there is the spectacle of Reagan proposing U.S. subsidized grain for the USSR, while continuing sanctions against Poland—even though Cardinal Glemp and Lech Walesa called for their removal long ago, a view they reiterated to Whitehead during his visit.

There is also the matter of Polish pride, which can take on exaggerated forms to make up for feelings of inferiority. When Polish government spokesman Jerzy Urban suggested a collection of sleeping bags and blankets for the homeless in New York City after the U.S. sent powdered milk to Poland following the Chernobyl accident, probably few Poles donated blankets—other than the ones that they received at work and were instructed to "donate" at collection points so that the media would have a "photo opportunity." But the gesture amused those who tire of feeling that they are constantly the object of international charity. They believe that Poles can make it on their own, if given a chance.

One day in Poznan I saw a queue in front of a fabric store and learned that a shipment of cotton cloth of a fashionable style, which is usually not available, had arrived. When I tried to take a picture of the scene, one woman deliberately tried to block my shot and another shouted, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself!" When I asked why she objected, she simply explained, "Because so much nonsense is said about Poland in the West." Poles desperately want to be proud of their country and its achievements. They are particularly offended by the idea of "Polish jokes" as they are known in the U.S. But now they see more clearly than ever that for the present they are caught in the orbit of a power that holds them fast and no one, not even Ronald Reagan, can change that.

John J. Kulczycki teaches Polish history at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

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The Stars at Noon

By Denis Johnson
Alfred A. Knopf, 181 pp., \$15.95

By Geoffrey Fox

SINCE BEFORE ODYSSEUS encountered Circe, people have delighted in tales of a voyager among strangers. The theme is enchanting, like Circe herself, because it invites us to project our inner fears onto external, alien beings. But these projected images can also shape our images of foreigners and outsiders in real life. In this way, for example, fiction about North Americans wandering the Third World has political, literary and psychological consequences—whether or not the author is conscious of them.

Denis Johnson's *The Stars at Noon* is a case in point. It is a modern voyage tale in the oldest picaresque tradition. Here, the nameless narrator is a self-absorbed wisecracking North American prostitute, and the quest of this political innocent is to escape a very sinister revolutionary Nicaragua, whose dangers are evoked in vivid, paranoid language.

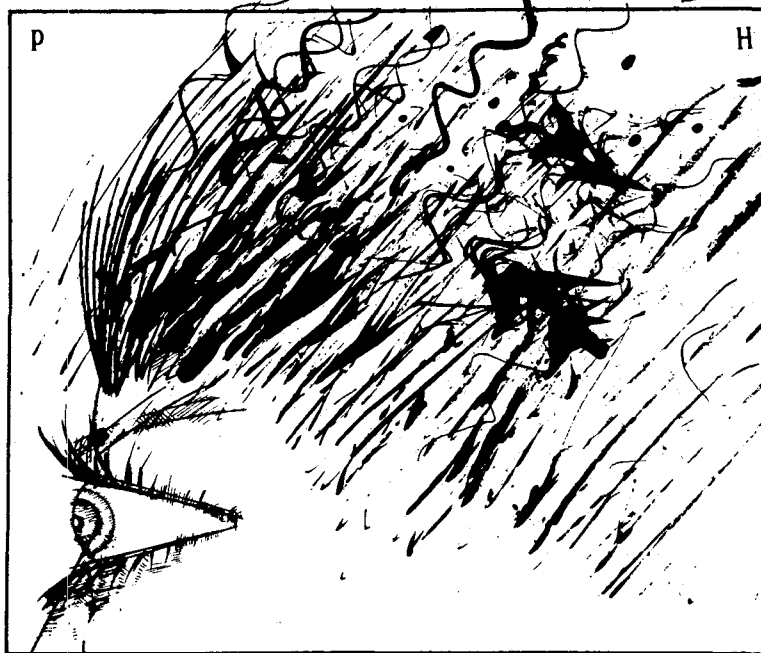
When the story begins she is in Managua, hustling her body for dollars to leave this "floundering greasy banana regime." Her original reason for going to Nicaragua was to stand vigil against the contrast with "Eyes for Peace" (an obvious allusion to "Witness for Peace"), but she soon got bored and quit. Her real reason for going, she says, was that she "wanted to know...the exact dimensions of Hell."

Everything about the country repels her. Even the air gives her "some appreciation of what it might be like to inhale a shirt sleeve soaked in horse-piss." Things break down and, in a memorably chaotic scene at the telephone exchange, she longs "for the sight of U.S. tanks further chewing up the streets of this slovenly capital where it was possible only to get nothing done and nobody seemed to think nothing not enough...."

The various Nicaraguan officials she beds disgust her. She sees them as menacing mediocrities—overweight or impotent or useless.

Love is strange: Inexplicably, she falls in love with a visiting English oil executive who is not only nameless but, we are told, "faceless," "a giant nonentity" with features that are "pudding-like and ghostly." She says that "making love with him was like passing through a patch of fog."

The oil man, another political innocent with liberal leanings, has tipped off the Nicaraguan government to the probable existence of an oil field on the Costa Rican border. For this he believes he is being pursued by the Costa Rican secret police, the Sandinistas and possibly the CIA—who may all be in cahoots somehow with big oil. The murkiness of this dubious conspiracy is



New package tour: hell on \$5 a day

intensified by the narrator's perpetual alcoholic haze, occasional hysteria and terrible Spanish (the Englishman speaks none), so she is reporting things she herself does not comprehend.

The Englishman drinks, bemoans his fate in uncompleted sentences and waits for the prostitute to save him. He is not only nameless and faceless, but feckless. Together they buy a used car and head south. As the heroine says, "I've always been curious about the meaning of what followed."

"Questions hovered and were never asked. Why head for Costa Rica when one of us was wanted in that country? Why not find a lawyer, or write a letter to the *Times*, or what about the Brit putting a call through to somebody he could trust at Watts Oil in London, or contacting a relative, even his wife?"

Why, indeed? The author, through his narrator, offers no ex-

planation but is simply acknowledging the implausibility, perhaps hoping we'll let him get on with his tale.

Baffling climax: The story's climax comes when the two are captured and held by an unlikely team of the Sandinistas and the CIA.

Johnson uses wonderfully striking language to create the impression of Nicaragua as a scary place where violence and torture are ever-imminent.

After a night in an uncomfortable hut, she agrees to sign a paper, unread, which will bring unspecified bad things to the Englishman but help her get out of the country.

Both are then ferried across the river to Costa Rica, where the Englishman is hustled off to an unknown fate and the narrator goes to San Jose to resume renting her body to drunken American servicemen.

The Stars at Noon seems intended to be a salacious, tropical update of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, to which it makes frequent self-conscious allusions—the events in *Stars* all take place in that year.

NICARAGUA

Johnson uses wonderfully striking language to create the impression of Nicaragua as a scary place where violence and torture are ever-imminent. But in fact, except for interludes of booze, sex and confusion, not much happens.

The oil man and the whore are just two gringos bumbling their way to the border because they're afraid of their shadows. And since her betrayal of her lover is as unmotivated as her being in Nicaragua in the first place, the grand climax carries none of the impact of Winston Smith's similar betrayal after succumbing to the torturers and their rats in 1984.

The heroine's unrelenting petulance will probably make most readers lose interest in her long before she completes her improbable quest. Her wisecracks contrast incongruously with the poetic images that crop up in her speech along with quotes from poets W. S. Merwin (a line of whose provided the title of the novel) and James L. White. There is little in her vulgar, tough-guy banter to suggest a woman's consciousness. Most often she appears to be the author, himself a poet, in drag.

The other gringos, the Englishman and the CIA man, speak like real people, but too infrequently and too unrevealingly to come alive. The real problem is with the Latin American characters, who seem to have been lifted not from experience but from other novels—Robert Stone's *A Flag for Sunrise*

and Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* possibly among them. At each remove, the impression becomes weaker. Stone's and Greene's novels are guerrilla thrillers, with the emphasis on violence and ideology. *The Stars at Noon*, however, seems merely intended to heighten the excitement of a gringo's erotic adventures.

In his earlier novels, *Angels and Fiskadoro*, Denis Johnson displayed great skills in dialogue, point of view and pacing. Here, although the descriptions are strong and euphonious, these other virtues are missing. This may be because he wrote the book in eight to nine months, as he told Jane Perlez in the *New York Times Book Review*.

"I felt rushed because I wasn't really steeped in the locale. The feeling of the locale was leaving me rapidly, so I wrote it fast. I wanted to give it the kind of sensation that it had left in me."

According to Perlez, Johnson wrote a novel rather than the article he had originally gone to Nicaragua to do because "people might take seriously what he had to say in nonfiction, a prospect that didn't sit easily. So he chose what intrigued him—the Central American atmosphere" for his "spiritual allegory about hell."

So, because he did not want to write seriously about a serious conflict, Johnson instead combined the clichés about the Latin American inferno with those about hellish communism. Whether he is serious or not, this is the kind of idea that encourages Col. North's friends to long "for the sight of U.S. tanks further chewing up the streets" of Managua and to wage war on the Nicaraguan peasantry. Because the tale of the voyager may affect the lives of real-life strangers, writers must be held accountable not only for their literary qualities but also for the understandings of the world that they convey.

Geoffrey Fox recently completed a novel, *The Liberators*, set in Venezuela.

The revolution and its discontents

Nicaragua: Unfinished Revolution

Edited by Peter Rosset and John Vandermeer
Grove Press, 505 pp., \$12.95

By Jim Naureckas

QUICK—BEFORE THEY GET THE teflon repaired: now's your chance to exchange disinformation for information.

Nicaragua: Unfinished Revolution looks at what gets lost behind the contra debate—it's not just a battlefield, it's a society undergoing a fascinating and unique process. Editors Rosset and Vandermeer in-

clude selections from many sources to convey the diverse meanings that "revolution" has in the Nicaraguan context.

Not all readings are pro-Sandinista: contra voices are well represented by Robert Leiken, the Kissinger Commission and the U.S. government (including Reagan's declaration of a "national emergency," now in its 22nd month). These sections, and their rebuttals, demonstrate how shallow and devious American propaganda can be.

But the book is at its best when it transcends the U.S. terms of debate. Perceptive chapters comment on Nicaragua's developments in education, culture, women's issues,

even the environment—aspects little discussed even by our "progressive" media. One highlight is Father Miguel D'Escoto, foreign minister of Nicaragua, discussing how his politics are an expression of his Christian faith.

Readers may be surprised by the

Unfinished Revolution is at its best when it transcends the U.S. terms of debate.

democratic nature of Nicaragua's political culture—not only in the electoral sector but in the grassroots organizations and unions Nicaraguans refer to as "participatory democracy." It's not the only place in the book that suggests that the North American left may have more to learn from Nicaragua than they do from us.

The book is a useful tool for opponents of contra aid, containing such indispensable resources as the Latin American Studies Association's report on the Nicaraguan elections, and the congressional report "Who Are the Contras?" that documents the connections between Somoza's National Guard and the contra leadership. There's also a directory of solidarity organizations, a CIA comic book and much, much more.

Contras in blockbuster-land

Bandits

By Elmore Leonard
Arbor House, 345 pp., \$17.95

By Joel Brown

AS A NATION WE'RE ENTERTAINED by capers, shoot-outs and car chases, on screen and in print. But unless you count Eddie Murphy as a Beverly Hills detective, our favorite cops and robbers don't get very radical. Producers and writers know that most of us want our concepts of good and evil reinforced—preferably with a .44 Magnum—not challenged. The shifting fears and paranoid of Americans over the last 30 years are mirrored in our changing cast of stock villains: Sov-

a Robert Stone, but he's no Ludlum-style hack, either. It's all in the telling. His capers are recounted with precise detail, puckish humor and the artfully gritty dialogue that's his trademark. In *Bandits* he proves he can write lines for presidents as well as garden-variety hoods.

Plots within plots: Jack Delaney, hotel-room burglar, was paroled from the Louisiana State Penitentiary to work for his brother-in-law Leo at his New Orleans mortuary. Jack's none too thrilled when Leo tells him to collect a corpse from the National Hansen's Disease Center at Carville. ("There are things I'd rather do than handle a person that died of leprosy," Jack tells Leo.) His attitude improves when the nun who's to ride with him turns out to be a decidedly secular figure in pressed Calvins. Then she tells him the person they're picking up isn't exactly dead. Amelita Sosa's disease is in remission, but her life is still in danger.

Lucy Nichols, the ex-nun, smuggled Amelita out of Nicaragua just ahead of the brutal Col. Dagoberto Godoy, a former Somoza lackey now a leader in the contras' battle against the Sandinista government. Godoy has come to New Orleans on a trip combining business and pleasure: he plans to raise \$5 million for the contras from local oilmen (including Lucy's dad) and to kill Amelita, his former mistress. Lucy enlists Jack to help Amelita escape, then they set about stealing Godoy's contra cash. Lucy wants to use her share to rebuild a Nicaraguan clinic Godoy destroyed searching for Amelita. Other players include Jack's old cell-mate, a chillingly cool Miskito Indian assassin-chauffeur, a bored CIA agent and this chap from the Irish Republican Army who'd also like to lift Godoy's loot.

Maybe it sounds like a bad episode of *Mission Impossible*. But word by word, Leonard makes it irresistible. Listen to his rhythms as Jack parks the hearse in front of a soup kitchen where he's to meet Lucy: "The bums in front of Holy Family, squinting in the sunlight, shading their eyes, said, Hey, it's the undertaker man. Who died? That ain't for me, is it? I ain't dead yet. Get outta here with that thing, Jesus. Come back after while. Hey, buddy, come back after we've et. They said, Here's one good as dead. Here, take this guy. Jack told them not to touch the hearse. Keep away from it, okay?"

A fine mess: Hard-core Leonard fans may not even notice the constant injection of politics, such as when Lucy tries to educate Jack about the wider implications of the mess they're in:

"The next part brought the story close to the present but was hard to follow, Sister Lucy referring to the political situation down there

like he knew what she was talking about. It was confusing because the ones that had been the government before, it sounded like, were now the rebels, the *contras*. The ones that had started the revolution back in the seventies were now running the country. He got that much. But which were the good guys and which were the bad guys?" It's a question repeated throughout *Bandits*, and Leonard provides no easy

answer. After hearing Lucy's accounts of contra atrocities, Jack is certainly confused when he breaks into Godoy's hotel room and finds a letter from a famous ex-movie actor.

"Dear Colonel Godoy...Because I know you have the 'stuff' that heroes are made of...I have requested my friends in the Pelican state to give you a generous leg up, that you may ride to victory over communism. I have asked them to help you carry the fight through their support, and come to realize in their hearts, *no es pesado, es mi hermano...*"

He ain't heavy, he's my brother. Ronald Reagan quoting the Hollies. It's almost as ludicrous as sending an autographed Bible to the Ayatollahs. How ironic that Leonard has been touted by none other than George Will. *Bandits* is no ideological screed a la Will, and many readers attracted by Leonard's style may look differently upon the contragate headlines thanks to the dark satire woven into *Bandits*. Perhaps Reagan can play himself in the movie. ■

Joel Brown is a Chicago-based freelance writer whose works have appeared in a variety of publications.



Elmore Leonard

The contras join our roster of popular villains, in a story that seems like *Nightline* outtakes.

iet spies, drug-crazed hippies (later to become *The Mod Squad*), conspirators in three-piece suits and mirrored shades, Arab terrorists, Miami coke barons and now greedy, homicidal yuppies. Mainstream thrillers represent the national consensus as to who are the good guys and who are the bad guys.

Now Elmore Leonard adds Nicaraguan contras to our roster of pop-culture villains, in a story current enough to sound like *Nightline* outtakes. In *Bandits*, his 24th novel, Leonard paints a picture of the contras that bears no resemblance to Ronald Reagan's description of "the moral equivalent of our founding fathers."

Leonard looks like the kind of English professor who's popular with his students, gray-bearded and bespectacled yet hip, knowing. At 61, he has become the kind of thriller-writer whose books (*Stick*, *Glitz*) go straight to the top of the *New York Times* bestsellers list and command huge sums for paperback and movie rights. Leonard doesn't exactly write novels of ideas, like

NOTEBOOK

Other Americas

Photographs by Sebastião Salgado

"The seven years spent making these images were like a trip seven centuries back in time to observe, unrolling before me, at a slow, ut-

terly sluggish pace—which marks the passage of time in this region—all the flow of different cultures, so similar in their beliefs, losses and sufferings." Whether he's juxtaposing gnarled faces and cacti in Brazil, showing laborers trudging through the ethereal mountain beauty of

Mexico or picturing a woman dwarfed by a religious idol (below), Salgado demonstrates a subtle power of identification with his subjects as well as an analytical, yet almost mystic, penetration of the contradictions inherent in the reality he probes.



By Pat Aufderheide

Building Biceps with Ferdinand

The latest entry to the video workout tapes is none other than Ferdinand Marcos. The Filipino ex-dictator apparently wanted to reassure his supporters during the latest coup attempt that he was fit enough to return, and sent a 25-minute tape showing him jogging, weight-lifting, doing leg exercises and shadow boxing. Trade newspaper *Variety* suggested that Marcos had opened the door to a "Cory Aquino's Workout Challenge," or cross-marketing techniques, perhaps with a line of Imelda Marcos Aerobics Shoes.

All the News That Fits

Shakeups at all three television networks, precipitated by the FCC's relaxation of longstanding rules governing sales and mergers, have been rough on the news. The public interest has been put on the block; no one can afford loss-leaders any more. After the *New York Times* charged that CBS Broadcast Group President Gene Jankowski had blocked approval for 18 news jobs and that the budget would be slashed by \$50 million, the network rushed in with denials. But the turmoil over the shape and standards for the news is real at all the national networks. Listen to NBC's Roger Mudd, who is leaving the network bought by General Electric and now headed by a GE executive who recently proposed that NBC personnel might ante up for a political PAC: "The changes in network news have been so sweeping—the economics, the pressures, the changes in ownership and news management—that for those of us who came in during the '50s and '60s, it's no longer a fun place to work." Mudd's going to public television's *MacNeill/Lehrer Newshour*.

All the News That's Right

Mudd's walking out of the frying pan into a swamp; public TV's been writhing under right-wing criticism of news coverage. PBS has begun a re-evaluation of policies governing news and public affairs, something that brought Jeff Cohen, the head of Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, to Washington to meet with PBS' special committee on program policies. Facing a group that frankly acknowledged heavy right-wing pressure, Cohen argued that PBS programming was already imbalanced from the right, with shows like *Firing Line*, *The McLaughlin Group* and *American Interests*, and with a clutch of business shows. "Why are there no regular shows hosted by women, Latinos and other minorities?" he asked. Why had PBS caved in to Accuracy in Media's demand for airing its "special rebuttal documentary" of PBS' Vietnam series? And why had PBS aired without acknowledgement of backing the documentary *Nicaragua Was Our Home*, produced by the Moonie-backed group CAUSA International? Committee members, apparently unused to pressure from the left, seemed nonplussed and one privately urged Cohen to "keep pushing." Meanwhile, at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), plans to fund a survey of "bias" in CPB-funded public affairs shows appear to be on hold, at least temporarily. Conservative ideologue Richard Brookhiser, a CPB board member, had been so outraged by watching the Alger Hiss docudrama *Concealed Enemies* that he'd suggested spending \$180,000 to put public affairs under scrutiny. Among those objecting was the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, whose President Lawrence Sapadin charged in a letter to Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-SC) (who heads the committee dealing with telecommunications) that the plan was "unwise, unlawful and arguably unconstitutional." Few scholars have bid for the dirty work; several academic researchers who did not suggested the study could have a "chilling effect." At the January board meeting, the bias study never reached the discussion stage, and may yet wilt before public and congressional disapproval.

Only Imported Sexism, Please

Tune in to Canadian TV for a look at broadcast programming that doesn't sexually stereotype women. At least, that's what Canada's telecommunications regulatory agency has ordered—both for programs and commercials—on pain of loss of license. Broadcasters can use the guidelines already developed by their industry association, but the regulatory agency has decided that "self-regulation has been only partially successful in improving the portrayal and participation of women in the Canadian broadcasting industry." They're even making a list of broadcasters who have flagrantly disregarded their own guidelines so far. Syndicators can relax, though. Neither imported programming—many U.S. shows are broadcast in Canada—nor cable services are affected.

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IN THE ARTS

Light of Day

Directed by Paul Schrader

By Pat Aufderheide

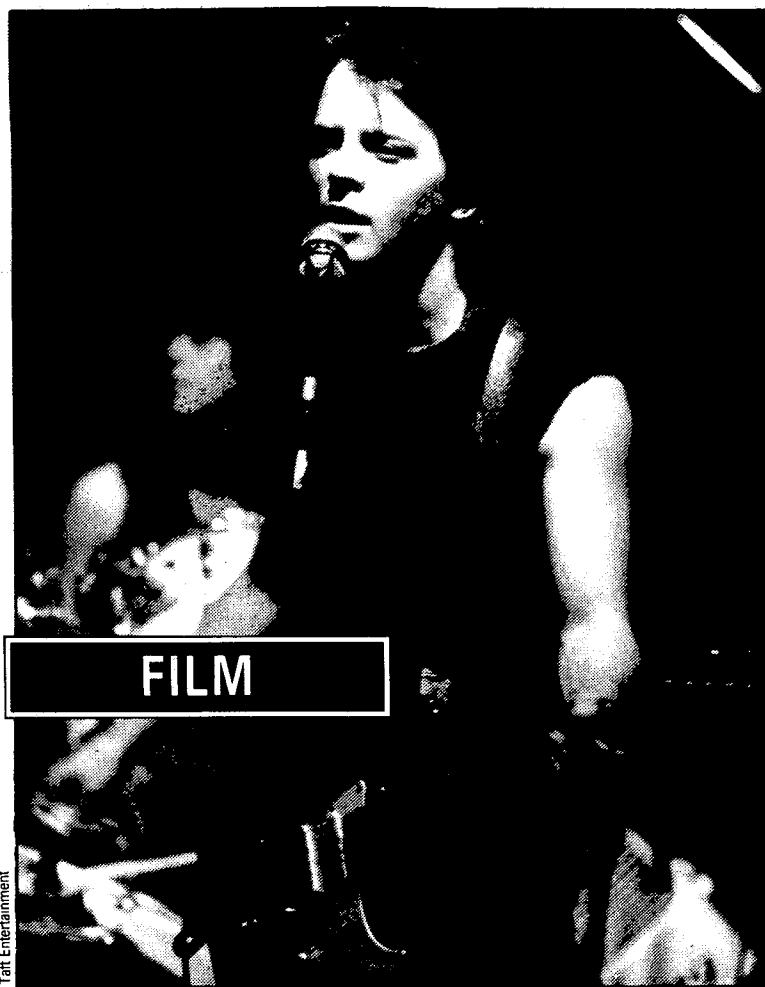
FOR A WHILE THERE IN THE FALL, the good movies wouldn't stop coming: *Something Wild*, *True Stories*, *Decline of the American Empire* and, oh god, *Blue Velvet*. Then came Christmas, with a thud—*The Mission* and that sodden, pointless trek to *The Mosquito Coast*.

Now we're in the midst of the mid-winter backwash, and the guy who wrote *The Mosquito Coast* is back, as director of *Light of Day*. Starring Michael J. Fox (the kid who made *Back to the Future* the top box office winner of 1985), *Light of Day* is being represented as a rock 'n' roll teen-pic. With its title anthem written by Bruce Springsteen and its location in gritty, industrial Cleveland, it catches the adult eye as a promising film about Rustbowl dreams. It founders, however, on Paul Schrader's overwrought moralizing.

Schrader, one of the populist Hollywood Brat Pack, has made a good living from his Midwestern Calvinist origins. Both his superego and his subconscious are the size of all outdoors, and his guilt for escaping to the glamorous life seeps through his movies (which include *Blue Collar*, *Hardcore*, *Cat People* and *Taxi Driver*). He's always searching for the ethical core in community at the same time that he rails against the individualist judgments of lower-middle-class fundamentalism. That tension is what's brought out the best and the worst in his movies. They can be magnificently exploitative in their obsession, and grotesquely patronizing in their moralism.

Light of Day is a personal project, turned commercial with the help of the bankable Michael J. Fox. Fox plays Joe Rasnick, a nice kid from Cleveland who's not bad on the guitar. His sister Patti (rocker Joan Jett) sings better than he plays, but she's trouble on a stick—she won't sit through a family dinner, she robs, she pads her five-year-old illegitimate kid with shoplifted meat at the supermarket. Joe and Patti's parents are middle-American ciphers; Dad (Jason Miller) is a hapless sap, and Mom (Gena Rowlands) is a sanctimonious religoid, whose censure of Patti's teen pregnancy apparently turned Patti into a heavy-metal rebel. When Mom falls mortally ill, all the crises come home to roost.

Prurience on parade: Here's a feature that seems determined at times to turn into *Rebel without a Cause* and at others into a movie-of-the-week. What would keep the networks from bankrolling it is Schrader's prurient emotionalism. Thanks in part to an ominous soundtrack and in part to the sullen



FILM

Michael J. Fox in *Light of Day*: bright spots amid the rusted dreams.

What indifference a day makes with Schrader

and primitivist acting of Joan Jett, you keep expecting the film to erupt into a *Carrie*-like outburst, with the anti-social Patti playing the demon.

There's also a hint of incest-passion between the siblings. But the gruesome deathbed reconciliation—in which one feels a profound sympathy for Gena Rowlands, an excellent actress in an unwinnable bind—returns the family madness to a social plane. (Schrader made this movie as a kind of memorial after his mother's recent death. You can only be grateful that you know no more about their relationship.)

Light of Day could have been that rare commercial feature that gives expression to the Americas that the media don't see—in this case, the frustration of Rustbowl kids trying to suck some hope from the straight-ahead drive of bar-band rock'n'roll. And, as in *Blue Collar*, there are some moments that ring true with the waning assembly-line culture. The intercutting between workplace and bar scenes, for instance, is neatly done—the powerful images carry the sense of kids on their way to nowhere trying to create something to live for now. And there are succinct ironies. A sign in the factory where Joe works, stamping out Charles-and-Di Royal Tour souvenir plates, reads, "Performance Is a Reflection of Attitude." Attitude is what these kids have in abundance.

But Schrader pummels his messages to death, with stagey and

rhetorical scenes. At one point, Patti steals tools from the home of the brother-in-law of the guy Joe has to work with every day. So the guy, a thuggish slob, confronts Joe in the factory restroom, right under a sign reading "Neatness Counts." When Joe finally hands over the money, the guy sneers his approval: "You've got family loyalty—too bad your sister ain't worth it." In a family scene, Joe has to listen to his father talk about his mother: "We've got a good life," the guy says bleakly, noting they don't go out or do much. "She gave me faith—what else is there?"

Morals and music: Schrader's heavy expository hand preys on the driving metaphor of the film, popular music. The Barbusters play old-fashioned rock, because, Joe must say, it's not "just like working at the factory." When Patti cops out to a heavy metal band, and Joe's buddy sells out to easy-listening club music, we get scene after scene discussing integrity and musical image. And in case you miss the point that rock accesses a vitality missing in these kids' daily lives, you get this interchange between brother and sister. Joe: "I'm living my life by common sense!" Patti: "I'm living my life by an idea!"

In *Light of Day*, Paul Schrader tapped into a set of conflicts that are being played out to a rock beat all over America. Unfortunately, Schrader doesn't trust the kids, or the music, to tell the story. ■

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Gay Catholics

Continued from page 7

fessor at Brooklyn College.

Jeanine Gramick, co-founder of New Ways Ministry, agrees with Gordon's estimate. Gramick says she sees "plenty of young gay seminarians, but they're extremely homophobic. They're not 'gay' in the sense of affirming their sexual identity, but of course the atmosphere in Rome makes it nearly impossible for them to do that. I would add that there's a high number of gays in the Vatican, but this may only add to the fear of dealing with the issue."

Homosexuality has joined abortion and women's ordination as a litmus test of orthodoxy for the church, says Gordon. Ambitious priests must make a special effort to toe the church line in these areas before

they're considered for a bishop's miter or a cardinal's hat. Two gay clergy who requested anonymity told *In These Times* that some of these closeted gays are in fairly powerful positions as "point men" for U.S. bishops who are fleshing out policy on gays for a diocese. They're consequently pretty tough on gays because they especially need to prove their allegiance to church teachings and avert any suspicion of their sexual orientation.

But Gordon and others say that this particularly conservative configuration of the Catholic hierarchy now in the Vatican may ultimately do some good. Before a new sexual ethic based in human experience can be created (along the lines of other Vatican II reforms), the current one must be thoroughly exposed as bankrupt. The church has already shown that its not credible on birth control and women's issues. The Vatican's recent actions on homosexuality have pushed gay and straight alike to examine an issue that was probably the most marginal in the church. Gordon and Gramick see the possibility of new-found coalitions with other Catholics ostracized because of dissent on sexual matters.

Meanwhile, Pope John Paul has planned a visit to San Francisco in mid-September as part of a U.S. tour. Local clergy and gay leaders are warning that the visit could lead to mass demonstrations and possible violence. Miles Riley, the spokesman for the archdiocese of San Francisco, told the gay weekly *New York Native* that he doesn't think there will be any violence. But, he added, "there's always a chance the pope will cancel his visit. Things could happen in other parts of the world."

Beth Maschinot is a former *In These Times* In Short editor.

Communists

Continued from page 8

maintaining critical intellectuals, Pierre Juquin, was also protesting, and at length. As the main target of the January 27 resolution against "liquidators," he insisted on braving hostile interruptions to read his 16-page "platform." Juquin's main point was the following: "The movement of society refutes the pessimism of the political bureau. It refutes the pseudo-theory of the 'drift to the right' which is only an alibi for the party's failures."

The fashionable comeback of free enterprise ideology, or "neo-liberalism," said Juquin, has been due in part to the lack of credible responses offered by progressive forces. "Social democracy has brought progress in various countries, but its powerlessness to resolve problems in depth is clearer every day, and it is challenged even in its strongest bastions, as shown in the Federal Republic of Germany by the growth of the Greens."

But neo-liberalism "does not respond to human need," said Juquin, calling on a break with "all forms of economism" and definition of goals "in terms of human needs." Juquin, who has gone back to his profession of teaching German after losing his post as PCF spokesman, said it was "unthinkable for society to fail to develop its relations with nature." French (ostrich-like) reactions after Chernobyl "are the perfect example of those refusals to reconsider that take us farther and farther from reality," he said.

Juquin also criticized the PCF's failure to "inform and mobilize our fellow citizens" on the priority issue of peace, or to challenge the undisputed consensus on nuclear deter-

rence. "Slogans and generalities are not enough. It is necessary to analyze the situation," he said.

Juquin said he was convinced that "authentic Marxism, which rejects dogmas and includes doubts, constitutes the indispensable theoretical base." He criticized "disdain for theory" as part of the "self-destructive mechanism of a revolutionary theory."

His text was studied by an informal association of "renovators" drafting a manifesto published last week.

The big question is whether "renovation" is ever going to be possible within the PCF, or if what is at stake is to save something from the party's inevitable demise in order to build a new force on the left. Juquin says he wants to "avoid the huge waste" of losing "the entire potential accumulated historically by the Communist movement." People in the Socialist Party who rejoice at Marchais' victory and the death of the PCF are committing a "basic error," he warns. Socialist Georges Sarre recently observed that the PCF's "spectacular weakening, its internal implosion" are not enough to make voters turn automatically to the Socialist Party. The PCF's long death agony, far from strengthening a new left in France, is producing a situation where it is being said more and more, without too much exaggeration, that "there is no left in France."

In Finistère, the far corner of Brittany, renovator Communists have begun their own newspaper and started giving dinners to save the party. "When the party has lost more than half its following in less than 10 years, the leaders are in a fine position to call us 'liquidators,'" the Breton Communists say, "It's the leaders who are liquidating the party."

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Cuba

Continued from page 24

in all senses makes "society concrete and the individual abstract."

Mingled roots: How to establish a new, "synthetic" identity forged from indigenous African and European roots is a question that haunts Latin America as it kicks over the traces of colonialism and tries to deal with its vestiges. For instance, Martinican artist Alex Burke has initiated a fascinating course study at the École Régionale d'arts Plastiques de la Martinique called "Memory, Traces, Identity." He asks students to visualize themselves about to face death: "You want to leave some testimony to your passage. You are thus a witness; you must define and situate yourself geographically, historically, ethnically, socially, by understanding your environment, your life and your ambitions," using only local materials at hand to create the art work.

Easier said than done. Caribbean countries in the process of autonomous development are still impeded by empires more difficult to identify or exorcise than their original colonizers—the ubiquitous multinationals and Americanized mass culture. The difficult balancing act applies to culture as well as to politics and economics, but where Western efficiency in practical areas is hard to deny, in the cultural arena the Third World holds its own strengths.

Unlike the U.S., which has no stated cultural policy and therefore absorbs attempts to affect this amorphous "non-existent" policy, Cuba and most Third World countries are acutely aware of the importance of cul-

ture. Their policy is often to use what they can from the First World, trying not to throw out modernist advances with the muddled waters of inauthentic internationalism; to maintain their independence while seeking new systems that will eventually work better for their own cultures.

In Cuba, this process is enriched, and complicated, by a generational change. The first group of artists to grow up in the Revolution concentrated on political support for the regime. As the next generation emerged, it moved into deeper waters. Artist Consuelo Castañeda told Coco Fusco and Robert Knafo (in *Social Text*, No. 15): "I wouldn't go on representing a 25-year-old identity that no longer fit.... When the Ministry of Culture was formed in 1976, Armando Hart made it clear that we too are Western, thus freeing us from a very oppressive tabu," and opening doors to the international mainstream of avant-garde arts.

Style of reproduction: Change was a realistic agenda. Young Cuban artists (in their 20s and early 30s) are particularly influenced by pop art and conceptual art—the parents of "postmodernism" in the U.S. as well. Castañeda's own works incorporate the imagery of art history and popular culture. She says that since Cubans receive European/U.S. culture through reproductions, "we like our work to look slick, like reproductions in a magazine. It all takes place unconsciously. That's why we had to found a movement that concentrated on style, on the mode of presentation."

Her colleague Flavio Garcandía, maintains that this gives the Cubans greater freedom—they can learn from international art while still keeping it at arm's length. And he

adds: "We would have to ask what popular culture is in Cuba. Last year the most popular singer here was Lionel Richie. Before that it was Michael Jackson. They belong to our popular culture just as much as *la nueva trova* ('new song') and the 'Cuban Sound.'"

The movies, melodrama, soap opera, comics and fashion are all favorite sources of the new Cuban art, as they are major elements of new art in New York. Yet the ethics are different. Arturo Cuenca "wants to make people conscious of things, make them think.... This does not mean giving them goods, entertaining them or making them happy. I do not believe in art as a palliative." His interest in fashion lies in the ways it lets people "express themselves psychologically, artistically, as individuals. Traditionally, fashion has been an instrument for social hierarchization. I want to make fashion a process of self-cultivation, take advantage of fashion's integral relation to people's lives and give it an authentic character."

Ruben Torres Llorca, whose work is also pop/conceptual-based, sees his colleagues' concerns as "a new phenomenon created by the symbiosis of two societies. It's kitschy. The structures brought together are completely inharmonious." Ricardo Rodriguez Brey attributes to Cuban art a "particular tension" brought on by "this constant self-questioning."

As Third World nations try to find and fit together the fragments of their cultural roots in national history and in cacophonous cultural reality, they must also integrate internal and external politics, individual and communal survival. As Hart says, "We have been insisting for almost 10 years now that until art enters into intimate relations with material production, we can't speak of art within the conditions of socialism." It hasn't happened yet in Cuba (or with any aesthetic success anywhere else, for that matter), but this goal certainly provoked the Bienal organizers to make a special point of spreading the auxiliary shows and events all over the city to different neighborhoods and community centers, some of which had not previously exhibited art.

Artistic sprawl: A show for peace, by children, took place at the spectacular educational/vocational/recreational complex in Parque Lenin. Another show featured youth, and a third—one of the Bienal's liveliest—took place at the Instituto Superior de Arte, the beautiful modern art school on the city's outskirts. Among the impressive student work was a sprawling collaboration by a group called "Puree" that reflected not only a social awareness—both global and local—but also a humorous and sophisticated knowledge of international neo-expressionism. Another Bienal show stretched out on the highways as artists designed billboards; other works were placed in factories and schools.

There were justified complaints about the Bienal's confused selection process, wherein the country's representation was selected by the local Communist Party, another's by an internationally respected museum director, and others by combinations thereof. The often amateurish installation at the Museum of Fine Arts was too large and chaotic and reflected the scarcity of professional materials, which can be blamed on the U.S. blockade of Cuba. And the choice of prizewinners, as is common in such giant shows, was often incomprehensible—though no more so than any other list might have been. (A high point for the U.S. non-delegation was the award of an honorable mention to the young New York

artist and activist Marina Gutierrez, whose homage to the deceased Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta was shown by Puerto Rico.)

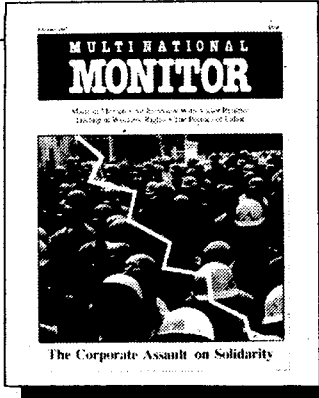
Among many high points for me were: the works of two Filipino artists—Lani Maestro's blackboard-like abstraction about torture and Pacita Abad's lush quilted tapestries; the works of two Mexicans—Arnold Belkin's imposing barkpaper portraits of the life and death of a young *guerrillero*-teacher and Marta Palau's marvelous transformation (executed within a workshop) of an elegant colonial mansion into a jungle of fiber figures that proclaimed the triumph of indigenous nature over colonized culture; and Puerto Rican Antonio Martorel's "graphic theatrical event"—a stylized, didactic and decorative political performance that is part of a body of work that led the FBI to include Martorel's studio in their raid last year of Puerto Rican *independentista* intellectuals.

The entire installation section of the Bienal, dominated by Cubans, Mexicans and Venezuelans, was particularly high-spirited and up-to-date, though sometimes just plain grandiose. One of the best—and most modest—pieces was Cuban Juan Francisco Elso Padilla's *Por America*, a lifesize striding figure of José Martí, mythologically garbed in a short suit of real earth, pierced by small fleur-de-lis forms that could be darts or sprouting plants. His bare legs peeled like an antique painted religious sculpture. Thus Martí became both martyred saint and symbol of rebirth, earth father, *campesino* and commander.

Two of the week's events were significant departures in North-South cultural interaction. The first was a first—an informal meeting of women artists from eight countries to propose a women's show at the next Havana Bienal. The second (which I helped organize as part of a committee of eight) was a permanent collection that is a gift to the artists and people of Cuba, consisting of more than 60 major works by U.S. artists, among them the very well-known, such as Oldenburg, LeWitt, Di Suvero, Holzer and Kruger, among others. The show—called *Por Encima del Bloqueo* ("Over the Blockade")—was exhibited en route as *En Camino a Cuba* ("On the Way to Cuba") last April in Mexico City, where it was acclaimed by some as the best U.S. show to be seen there in years, much to the displeasure of the U.S. Embassy. Aside from the importance of the work itself, we were pleased to have usurped the function of our non-existent Ministry of Culture.

When it got to Havana and was appropriately installed in "the House of Good Works" on the Calle Obrapia, "Over the Blockade" offered a poignant contrast to the Cuban art we saw elsewhere. As participating artist May Stevens remarked, the Cuban art—from its exuberant avant-garde to more conventional forms, such as the very good print show at the new Silkscreen Workshop—was wildly expansive, colorful, hopeful, sometimes even joyful. It may be that in an overall recipe for Latin American culture, the Cuban and Caribbean cultures provide a certain ecstatic ingredient (sometimes religiously based), which, when wedded to Fuentes' "tragic consciousness," offers a worldview unfamiliar to the northern part of the Americas. In general, the Third World's often desperate yet hopeful situation is engendering a kind of art that uses Western techniques to say something Westerners don't hear. As the poet Théophile Obenga has written, "The words are their words, but the song is ours."

Lucy R. Lippard is a New York-based art critic and a frequent contributor to *In These Times*.



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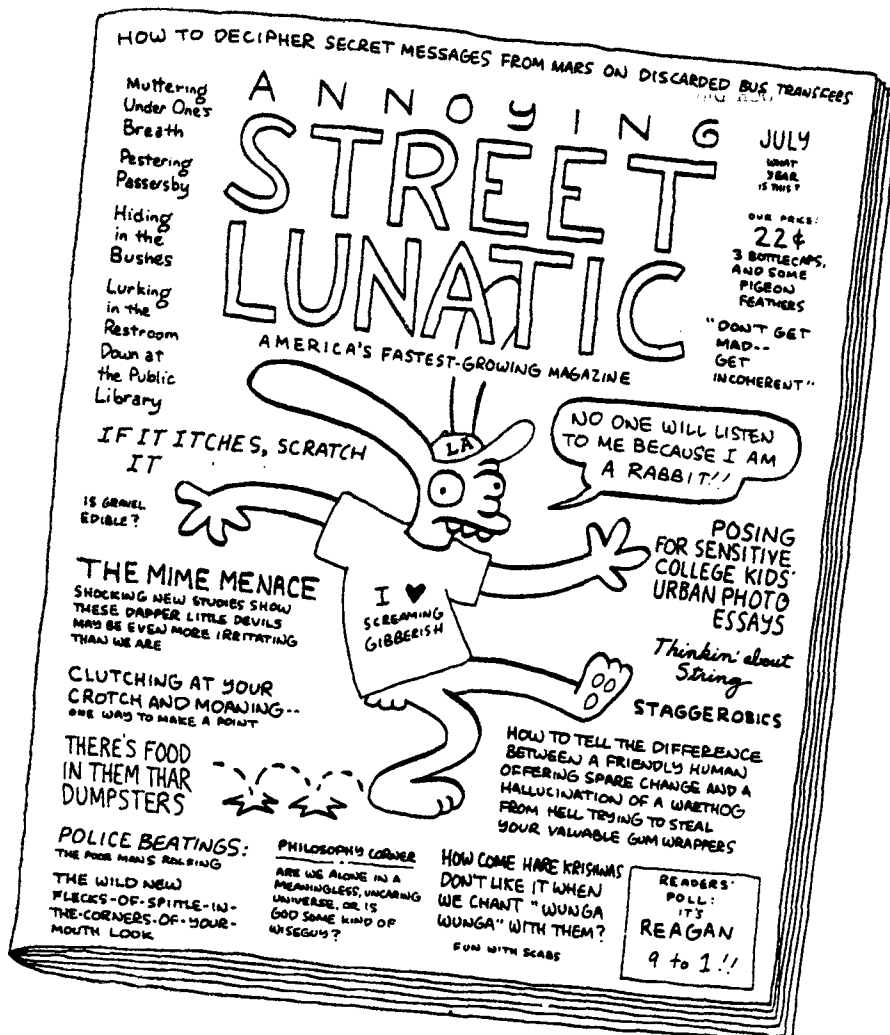
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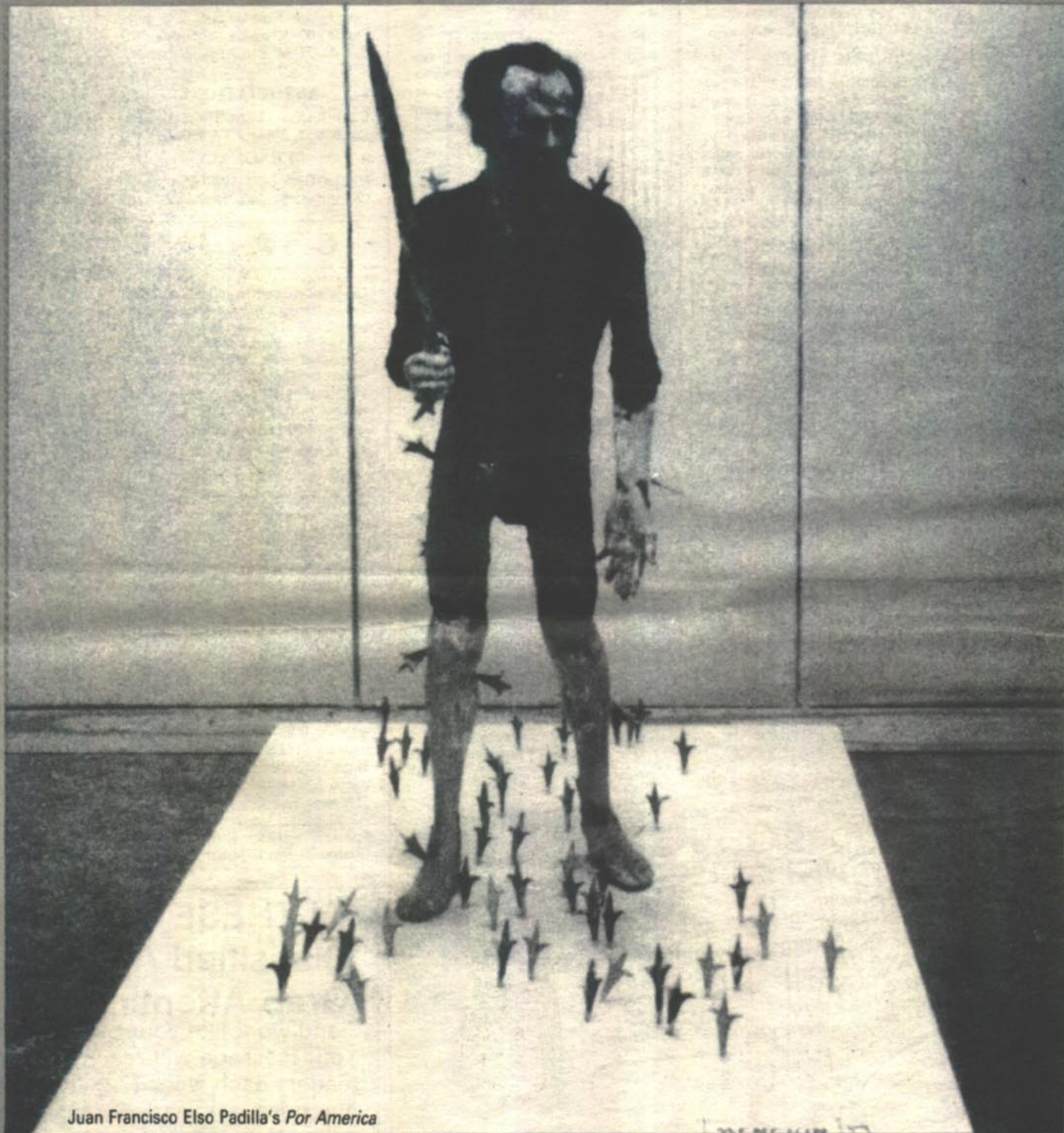
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Picturing a New World

Artists at the Cuban Bienal confront the U.S. legacy



Juan Francisco Elso Padilla's *Por America*

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By Lucy R. Lippard

IN THIS HEMISPHERE, A THIRD-WORLD ART EXHIBITION is an event. For gringos it's a unique event. The 2,000 paintings, sculptures, installations, graphics, photos and drawings at the Second Havana Bienal (Spanish for biennial) in late November (augmented by some 50 auxiliary shows in and around Havana, plus a three-day conference on Caribbean art and many workshops, seminars and public art activities) would never be seen here. It gave North American visitors—some 60 of us went from the U.S.—a sense of the importance of Cuba as a Latin American cultural focus.

The Bienal, followed by the older and more

prestigious Film Festival, was an ambitious affair for a small, poor country, but in the domain of cultural politics, it was money well spent. As Carlos Fuentes said recently, the role of Latin America is "to restore some kind of tragic consciousness," and "to make the United States understand that memory counts—that there is history, and that it does not renew itself every 24 hours when Dan Rather appears on the set."

I would add that revolutionary countries (to greater and lesser degrees) also restore to jaded Yankees some kind of optimism, a spiritual vigor that has leaked out of the U.S. as microwaved monotony and fantasy felicity gain ground. The visual arts are no exception. Armando Hart, the articulate Cuban

minister of culture, said at the Bienal's opening that the path of Third-World art must be:

...that of seeking history, that of knowing the world, that of proclaiming diversity.... We are interested in popular roots; we want to elevate them through technique, but in a way so that technique supports the art and doesn't lose its profound cultural meaning.... We want to see art integrated into the physical contours in which people live.... Art will be politically useful so long as it is art.... It may cost us more to gain the level of competence of imperialism in the natural sciences and technology...but in art and culture, in that which is essential about the spirit and sensibility of humankind, the Third World is saying "Presente!" in a definitive manner.

Time and again during the round tables, panels and lectures, the supreme cultural issue raised was identity—national identity, regional identity and, of course, the relationship of the artist's individual identity to its social counterparts. In Cuba, the question has acquired depth and complexity over the last decade. Raúl Martínez, the don of Cuba's first generation of modernists, recalls that he "found himself" as an abstract artist, but the Revolution then made him "more interested in finding out about others." This seems to bear out the premise of Guy Brett's important new book, *Through Our Own Eyes: Popular Art and Modern History* (New Society, 1987)—that an art that is revolutionary

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